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Autonomy Road: the Cultural Politics of Chicana/o Autonomous Organizing in Los Angeles, California

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Autonomy Road: the Cultural Politics of Chicana/o Autonomous Organizing in Los Angeles, California

by

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Dedication

To my parents, family, friends, and comrades. Siempre caminando juntos hacia el horizonte.

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This road is paved with the blessings, blood, sweat, and tears of my ancestors. I walk knowing that each step and at times misstep is a source of reflection and inspiration: a mirror of the past, present, and future. Ometeotl.

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Autonomy Road: the Cultural Politics of Chicana/o Autonomous Organizing in Los Angeles, California

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Since 1994, Chicana/o artists, musicians, and activists have been in dialogue with the Zapatista indigenous movement of Chiapas, Mexico. Such a transnational bridge has resonated in a new and unique form of Chicana/o cultural politics centered on the Zapatista concept of "autonomy" and "autonomous organizing." In Los Angeles, California, this brand of "Chicana/o urban Zapatismo," as I refer to it in the dissertation, is symbolic of recent political and cultural organizing efforts by Chicanos to combat housing gentrification, economic restructuring, racial and ethnic cleansing, environmental pollution in low-income areas, and mass anti-immigrant hysteria. This dissertation contends that Chicana/o urban Zapatismo is a result of various local, statewide, national, and international social justice movements that embrace the global trend in urban and rural areas towards constructing locally rooted participatory and democratic methods of organizing that are "horizontal" and that mobilize against such far-reaching social forces as racism and global capitalism.

Using ethnographic data and interviews collected between 2005 to 2007, this dissertation maps the emergence of Chicana/o urban Zapatismo by tracing its historical origins to the changing social, political, and economic conditions of ethnic Mexican communities in Los Angeles, California; capturing the everyday internal and external tensions between one primarily working class Chicano autonomous collective, the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE in El Sereno, California; offering the case study of the South Central Farm, a 14-acre Mexican and Latino immigrant community garden; and charting the trans-border organizing of Chicana/o urban Zapatistas surrounding the most recent Zapatista-initiated project, "the Mexican Other Campaign". These four distinct case studies converge in Los Angeles in the creation of a unique political process referred to as "urban Zapatismo". This ethnographic study suggests that by uncovering the everyday relationships and tensions between Chicana/o urban Zapatistas in Los Angeles and the communities they live in, researchers looking at the production of different forms of racisms and structural inequalities in urban areas may derive a greater understanding of social (re)organization and mobilization by a growing, diverse, and historically marginalized group like Chicanos in the United States.

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Becoming Zapatista/Researching Zapatismo

I was in my last semester of high school when several hundred poorly armed Mayan rebels calling themselves the EZLN (*Ejército Zapatista Liberación Nacional*) or Zapatistas, declared war against the Mexican government and took over seven municipalities and dozens of towns in the southeastern state of Chiapas, Mexico on January 1st, 1994. The Spanish-language news media replayed the few reports and interviews on the uprising during the evening news right before the mind-controlling and captivating *novelas* my parents and relatives watched daily to relax from a long day of work. The images of the uprising were of a criminal band of ski-masked guerrillas who were breaking the law and destroying public buildings in the process. Even the New York Times had a small article with very little detail on what many would argue was the first revolution of the 21st century.

The Mexican and international press focused most of their attention on the unprecedented signing of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), a free trade treaty between the United States, Mexico, and Canada that would open the borders to the free flow of commerce between these three North American countries.[1] For economists and politicians, NAFTA was Mexico's long awaited entry into the global (economic) community. The country's apparent political and economic stability were key indicators to international observers that the exiting business-minded president of Mexico, Carlos

[1] Gustavo Esteva in a September 2005 interview for www.inmotionmagazine.com called "The Revolution of the New Commons: Beyond Development, Beyond Economy, Beyond the Individual Self, Beyond the nation-state" explains how the 1994 Zapatista uprising came at a moment where everything seemed relatively calm and quiet in terms of news. In his words, "One very important point, though, is a question of luck. In the first week of 1994, nothing happened in the world. Not a plane crashed. No tsunami came. No princess died. No president had any sexual escapade. Nothing happened on earth. The media was empty. They had nothing to present us. So, on January 2, we had a thousand journalists in San Cristobal. CNN was projecting Zapatistas. We had beautiful images with the ski masks and all the emotion. It was perfect for the news. Six hours a day, CNN was presenting Zapatistas."

Salinas de Gortari had prepared Mexico for its transition into the neoliberal era. Mexico would become the model for other developing countries entering into the global economy. But as the days after the uprising show, the news of an indigenous armed uprising did travel across Mexico and the world.

The poorly armed Mayan indigenous rebels caught the Mexican army by surprise those first few days after the New Year. Fierce fighting in the cobble-stone streets of San Cristobal de las Casas and other colonial towns in Chiapas between EZLN rebels and Mexican soldiers ended in an increase in rebel casualties. As the Mexican army gained military control of the situation, an immediate response by national and international human rights groups, Leftist organizations and collectives from every corner of the world, and concerned Mexican citizens from throughout Mexico demanded a cease fire in the violence and arrived in solidarity of the Mayan rebels.

Twelve days after the uprising, a cease fire between the Zapatistas and the Mexican military appeared to end the violence in Chiapas for the time being. At that point, Zapatismo appeared in my Chicano history classroom in the form of a communiqué, *El Despertador Mexicano*, brought to us by three Chicana college tutors who were politically involved in the NAFTA protests across the Bay Area. The communiqué stated,

> Mexicans: workers, campesinos, students, honest professionals, Chicanos, and progressives of other countries: We have begun the struggle that is necessary to meet the demands that never have been met by the Mexican State: work, land, shelter, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace.
>
> For hundreds of years we have been asking for and believing in promises that were never kept. We were always told to be patient and to wait for better times. They told us to be prudent, that the future would be different. But we see now that this isn't true. Everything is the same or worse now than when our grandparents and parents lived. Our people are still dying from hunger and curable diseases,

> and live with ignorance, illiteracy and lack of culture. And we realize that if we don't fight, our children can expect the same. And it is not fair.
>
> Necessity brought us together, and we said "Enough!" We no longer have the time or the will to wait for others to solve our problems. We have organized ourselves and we have decided to demand what is ours, taking up arms in the same way that the finest children of the Mexican people have done throughout our history.
>
> We have entered into combat against the Federal Army and other repressive forces: there are millions of us Mexicans willing to live for our country or die for freedom in this war. This war is necessary for all the poor, exploited and miserable people of Mexico, and we will not stop until we achieve our goals.
>
> We call on all of you to join our movement because the enemies we face, the rich and the State, are cruel and inhuman. They will put no limit on their bloody instinct to destroy us. It is necessary to struggle on all fronts and from there, with your sympathy, your solidarity, the dissemination that you give our cause, your adoption of the ideals that we are demanding, your incorporation of the Revolution by raising up your people wherever they may be found, these are very important factors in our final triumph. (Zapatistas, December 31, 1993)

My classmates and I read the declaration as if it was poetry. As activists in our high school and community, we were excited to learn that indigenous Mayans had taken up arms against the injustices they faced. That their existence as indigenous people, did not figure only in Mexico's past but part of its present. We compared the Zapatista rebellion to the 1910-1917 Mexican revolution Zapatistas we read about in our Chicano history class. The invoking of Mexican revolutionary figure, General Emiliano Zapata, he himself of indigenous descent, transcended borders as a symbol of resistance for Chicanos and Zapatista Indians. Weeks later we received the background we were awaiting with the Zapatista communiqué, *Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds, a Storm and a Prophecy*, written years before the uprising but introduced three weeks after.

The *Chiapas* communiqué spoke to the years, decades, and centuries of exploitation faced by indigenous communities in Chiapas. It laid out the contradictions of Mexico's entrance into the global economic community. Although the ecologically

diverse state of Chiapas was rich in natural resources and supplies the country with oil, water, and electric energy, it also has the dubious distinction of having one of the poorest populations in Mexico. The communiqué shed light on the inequalities facing Mayan Indians in Chiapas and the effects NAFTA and neoliberal reforms would have on rural peasants and Indians throughout Mexico. They became a forecast for the political, social, and economic woes Mexico would face beginning in 1995 with the devaluation of the currency and the Mexican stock market crash.

The Zapatistas early communiqués resonated with the intense student activism I participated in during my senior year in high school. The "*Ya Basta!*' (Enough!) so often used to identify the Zapatista struggle, made sense to myself and many of my classmates in terms of the educational inequity we faced in the public schools of Berkeley. Protesting a high push-out rate of Chicano students, the recent attacks on immigrant students, and the constant gang profiling of Latinos at our school, we organized several successful walk-outs and protests in coordination with public high schools throughout the Bay Area. The Zapatista rebellion was used often as a reference point when we were told that Chicano and Latino students should not protest and question the social injustices facing youth of color in the Bay Area.

MY FIRST FACE TO FACE ENCOUNTER WITH THE ZAPATISTA COMMUNITIES

After high school, I became more and more interested by the Zapatistas and the growing support for their cause. The growing dissent by the majority of the population in Mexico that saw profit margins grow for the wealthiest Mexicans and growing poverty for the masses of Mexicans who were unemployed caused for a funnel of support for the Zapatistas that they so urgently asked for. Mexican citizens who sought solidarity with the Zapatista protested by the thousands in such major cities like Mexico City. They

demanded for the government to end the violence in Chiapas and enter in negotiations with the rebel group.

The February 1994 cease fire between the Mexican government and the Zapatistas and the growing support for peace by Mexicans and the international community lead to a series of peace talks in the Altos region of Chiapas, Mexico. At that moment, the Zapatistas put down their weapons and began a new stage in their struggle, one with the motto of "our word is our weapon." Dialogue became the new weapon for the Zapatista rebels. In turn, they outreached to different sectors of Mexican society that shared the same sentiments on how to proceed with their struggle. In August 1994 the Zapatistas called their first encounter with Mexican civil society. The National Democratic Convention, attended by six thousand people, outlined the demands by the Zapatistas at the negotiation table with the Mexican government. That winter, the Zapatistas declared the creation of 38 autonomous municipalities in Chiapas, Mexico.

By the start of 1995, Mexico had a new president in the PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*) candidate, Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon. Following the business minded technocratic approach of Salinas de Gortari, Zedillo would continue with Mexico's entry into the global economy. Yet, he did not foresee the greatest economic downturn in Mexico's history as an obstacle to Mexico's growth. A greater social and economic crisis than the 1982 economic crisis, Mexico underwent a drastic devaluation of the peso, causing for high levels of inflation and unemployment throughout the country. Zedillo's response to the Chiapas conflict was to send over 20,000 soldiers to Chiapas and announce arrest warrants for the Zapatista chain of command. This displaced tens of thousands of indigenous people and peasants and started a new low-intensity warfare campaign to squelch the rebellion from spreading

throughout the state. The Zapatistas in turn, created five political and cultural centers throughout Chiapas called Aguascalientes.

That same year I transferred from UC Davis to UC Berkeley. As a work study job I worked as an assistant teacher, and later as a student teacher of Chicano Studies in my old high school, and at the same time continued participating in Zapatista solidarity events throughout the Bay Area. With the information I gathered at solidarity events, I introduced students to some of the basic tenets of Zapatismo by integrating their communiqués into the Chicano Studies curriculum. Just as my cohort of friends found resonance with the Zapatista cause, my students discussed how the struggles of indigenous peoples in Mexico could speak to their identity formation as Chicanos or Latinos in the United States.

We followed the events in Chiapas closely and participated in Zapatista spearheaded consultations over the course of what was being called Zapatismo. By inviting us to share our thoughts and opinions on what course they should take, the Zapatistas were offering us a new way to do politics. International solidarity had always felt one sided in the United States, the Zapatistas opened the valve of solidarity so that the flow of ideas and struggles could go both ways. Nearing the end of 1995, the Zapatistas finally entered into full peace talks with the Mexican government in the town of San Andres Sakamchen de los Pobres. The negotiations would start with the question of indigenous rights and culture. In February 1996, the EZLN and the Mexican government signed the historic San Andres Accords outlining a radical approach to indigenous rights, land ownership, and autonomy. As the next series of talks continued over democracy, the Mexican government withdraws from the table since it would mean drastic changes to the Mexican constitution and a disruption to their neoliberal plan for the country.

By August 1996, the Mexican government had not returned to the negotiation table and the low-intensity warfare in Chiapas continued displacing communities. In the meantime, the Zapatistas continued to work on the project of autonomy through their autonomous municipalities and reach out internationally through the first of a series of encounters between the Zapatistas and civil society. The August 1996 First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism was attended by thousands of people from all over the world. Although I did not attend the encounter, stories of the encounter discuss how it brought different sectors of society together in dialogue about the effects of neoliberalism on communities worldwide. Breaking away from the tendency to build a revolutionary vanguard, in the image of past militant social movements, the Zapatistas did not provide a blue print on how to combat neoliberalism but instead asked everyone to participate in a dialogue on identifying what we are up against and what we stand for. The Zapatista motto of, "one no, many yeses!" became a rallying cry for participants to not only organize against neoliberalism but also continue fighting in defense of their communities. The encounter was also a way for many of the participants to coordinate locally, regionally, and internationally around different issues and find common resonance with each other.

By 1997, it was not uncommon to see at marches or political actions or at collective meetings, people intersect the struggles for fair housing or against police abuse with the struggles of indigenous people in Chiapas or the struggle for land in Brazil. The Zapatistas were a major force in linking these different struggles and creating a formidable force against the neoliberal policies that flooded different communities.

In my own organizing I could see that linking these struggles was an important part of understanding the changes my communities were going through. Lack of funding for Ethnic Studies programs at UC Berkeley, the growing gentrification of Berkeley and

Richmond, California, and the constant attack on undocumented Mexicans and Latinos in California became our own battlegrounds in the Bay Area. The Zapatistas, their words and actions, continued to be a source of inspiration and hope when it felt like our own organizing was not seeing much success or our communities were not getting any better. The Zapatistas challenged us to rethink our methods for organizing and building community when it was easier to argue, talk over, sit back, and wait for someone to save us. I would gain greater perspective of the Zapatista resonance by 1998 when I made my first visit to Chiapas, Mexico.

My First Trip to Zapatista Communities in Chiapas, Mexico

By the summer of 1998, I along with my college housemate, Rey Leon, ventured to Chiapas, Mexico soon after participating in the annual NACCS conference (National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies), held that year in the historic city of Mexico City. I was in my fourth year at the University of California Berkeley and my roommate Rey had just graduated in May. We were both local community organizers and student activists on the Berkeley campus. Rey was a well known community organizer and health promoter in the central valley of California and I was currently teaching Chicano Studies at my old high school in Berkeley, California. We were both taking extended vacations through Mexico via bus and had decided to make the long travel south to Chiapas for a week.

A travel advisory still existed for United States citizens heading to Chiapas because of the increasing conflict between the Mexican military and the EZLN. By 1998, the Zapatista struggle was in its fourth anniversary of its uprising and the amount of military personnel sent to squelch its momentum had multiplied to an estimated third of

the entire Mexican army in Chiapas.[2] Indigenous communities supporting the Zapatistas or at least thought of supporting the EZLN faced constant harassment and attacks by the PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*) backed paramilitary forces throughout the state. The massacre of forty five people, many of them women and children, in the small village of Acteal on December 22, 1997 by paramilitary and local police forces opened the floodgates for military intrusions, roadblocks, and bases deep within the conflict zone. Traveling to and from Chiapas resulted in passing through various military and immigration checkpoints from Oaxaca all the way down to the southern border town of Tapachula. Zapatista supporters and international observers traveling to Chiapas were targets of harassment and immediate deportation for their political support of the indigenous rebel group.

During our long and windy 17-hour bus drive to the colonial town of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, we spoke quietly to each other of what we might accomplish by going to Chiapas. Rey and I were hoping to visit if possible a Zapatista community or at least make San Cristobal de las Casas our starting point. We knew very little of the dangers in traveling south to Chiapas besides what the alternative news and report backs from Zapatista supporters had shared during several Zapatista solidarity events we attended in the Bay Area. Our naïve Chicano curiosity of the Zapatistas resembled what Mexicano border brujo and performance artist Guillermo Gomez Pena initially critiques and accepts when he states:

> Though I was fully aware of the postmodern media strategies of the Zapatistas and of their masterful manipulation of the media, the idea of "El Aztec High Tech" servidor shaking hands (or rather exchanging props and performance tips)

[2] This number is commonly used by non-governmental organizations working on the low-intensity warfare in Chiapas, Mexico. Of these organizations, CIEPAC and CAPISE are the most commonly referred organizations speaking on the militarization of Chiapas, Mexico.

> with rebels just seemed too hip and opportunistic for my taste. However, last August, I finally succumbed to my own curiosity. (Gomez-Pena, 2000: 102)

Right before we left Mexico City, we ran into a short Chicano man with a long ponytail and goatee in the lobby of our hotel. His name was Roberto Flores, a well-known Los Angeles based community organizer and one of the first Chicano activists to head down to Chiapas, after the Zapatista uprising of January 1st, 1994. He approached Rey and I and candidly asked, "Are you both headed to Chiapas? If you are, make sure to stop by the *Estación Libre* house in San Cristobal de las Casas." We both found it odd that Roberto would ask us such a question since we had not told anyone we were going down south nor did we know what *Estación Libre* was. We headed to Chiapas thinking it was just an odd coincidence between Roberto and the two of us and that we probably would not run into him again.

The bus made its descent on the highlands town of San Cristobal de las Casas early in the morning. The fog and mist of the highlands covered much of the surrounding mountains. The temperature in San Cristobal was cool for that time of the year and the air was definitely cleaner than the smoggy confines of Mexico City. I noticed on the side of the road, Mayan women collecting and carrying fire wood on their backs for the days cooking. Mayan men stood along the curb of the road, waiting for the Volkswagen passenger vans to pick them up and take them to work. Rey and I got off the bus and started walking towards the town square, hoping to find a small inexpensive posada or hotel to stay for a couple of nights.

We arrived to the main square of San Cristobal de las Casas and started walking towards the Church where the famous Bishop Samuel Ruiz held mass for people daily. Upon walking the plaza adjacent to the Church we came across Roberto Flores once

again. This time Roberto was with two Chicana students attending UC Santa Cruz but originally from East Los Angeles.[3]

Roberto and the two Chicanas walked toward us and immediately started a conversation with Rey and myself. After fifteen minutes of conversation, they eventually invited us to the *Estación Libre* house in one of the nearby barrios. Once there, we could ask the members of *Estación Libre* whether we could stay there for a couple of nights. At the time, *Estación Libre*, founded primarily by Miguel Rodriguez, a Chicano from East Los Angeles who organized the August 1997 encounter between Los Angeles-based Chicana/o activists and artists with the Zapatistas, and Karl Singh, an Asian American activist from New York city, was a space for US people of color activists to come and work in solidarity with the Zapatista communities. For Miguel and Karl, the disproportionate number of people who arrived in support of the Zapatistas was urban Mexican, European, or US white solidarity activists. Peace delegations from the United States rarely had any people of color and the few that did arrive oftentimes felt isolated and excluded from the rest of the groups.

Estación Libre was established as a way to bridge not only the solidarity efforts between communities of color from the US with the Zapatistas but also to share similar stories of resistance between uniquely different racialized populations in the US and in Chiapas, Mexico. By offering a space for US people of color activists to work out of in Chiapas, Mexico, Estación Libre also hoped to bring communities of color in dialogue with each other over similar concerns dealing with racism, sexism, police brutality, domestic violence, environmental racism, and war.

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[3] I bring up this moment often to Roberto, to remind him of how some things you just have to leave it to faith. The odds of running into him were extremely slim since he did not leave us with an address or directions to where he was staying. This dissertation would not have been written had this encounter not happen.

Once Rey and I arrived to the two story house, also called the Orange House by local Zapatista solidarity groups, we introduced ourselves to the other people inside that were staying there. In total there were eight Chicanos, including Rey and I, two African American activists from New York, and one Asian American who were staying at the house. Miguel and Karl offered what little room was left in the six bedroom home and explained the collective rules of the space. They also gave us a history of the space and the idea behind Estación Libre. During our stay we shared in several intense political and personal conversations on what the Zapatista struggle offered the struggles of people of color in the United States and what our role should be in Chiapas, a place so far away from our own communities. We also shared in the collective management of the space by cleaning and cooking together.

Roberto and the other Chicanos in the house asked us if we wanted to travel to the Aguascalientes, or political cultural center, of Oventik in the Highlands region of Chiapas. We agreed to travel with Roberto and the group and got ready for our hour and a half ride up the hills of the highlands. As I mentioned earlier, the intensification of military personnel in the conflict zone made traveling through Chiapas very difficult for the indigenous communities and (inter)national peace observers. Roberto explained to us before we left San Cristobal that we speak English only if we were to be pulled over by Mexican immigration officers or by military personnel. He mentioned to us that we not tell them that we were going to Oventik but instead to villages beyond Oventik where we could find amber.

Wooden sign that welcomes people into Zapatista territory.

On our trip up to Oventik, I witnessed the beauty of Chiapas, the green forests, flora, and fauna that made the state one of the richest in natural resources. I also noticed the dark side of Chiapas. One cannot go to Chiapas without noticing the extreme poverty that exists in the indigenous communities. Riding in a small Volkswagen mini-bus I could see the villages along the way to Oventik and the lack of electricity and other resources available to these indigenous communities. Paved roads to communities were only recently built and one can argue that they were built because of the armed conflict and the need for the Mexican army to travel to desolate places. After an hour, we arrived covered in fog and mist to the Aguascalientes of Oventik. The sign that read, "Bienvenido a tu Aguascalientes" greeted us before three ski-masked men approached us at the gate. Roberto introduced himself and asked the men if it was ok to meet with the *responsables*, or elected community leaders, about the history of Oventik. The masked men asked for our credentials and left for twenty minutes into the fog. We stayed outside

of the gate noticing in the twenty minutes at least four convoys of military trucks with armed soldiers pass by the road.

Once the men arrived back with our passports, they welcomed us through the gates and into the adjacent Health Clinic by the side of the road. Roberto pointed out on the side of the clinic's wall a building length mural painted by Chicanos, Mexicanos, and Zapatista men and women during the 1997 encounter between the three groups. He also singled out other murals throughout the compound that were also painted by Chicanos from Los Angeles and the Zapatistas. They were extremely impressive with iconic figures of Emiliano Zapata, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and Zapatista comandantes Ramona and Marcos. Although it was extremely foggy, we could see enough of the compound and the steep hill it was built on. We walked down this steep hill noticing different wood shacks that housed several autonomous projects and collectives. As we reached the bottom of the hill, the fog cleared up a bit and we noticed a large clearing that looked like an amphitheatre for thousands of people. At the center of clearing stood a small stage for meetings and a basketball court for pick-up games between communities and peace observers. We continued walking and talking about the space and its history until we reached the first building of what would turn out to be the autonomous school project. We could hear helicopters and jets pass above the thick fog of the Altos. It put into perspective the low-intensity warfare that communities in Chiapas were under.

During our visit to Oventik, we were able to speak to some of the compañeros and compañeras that worked out of the Aguascalientes. They spoke to us about how things were different before the Zapatista uprising. How no one cared about what happened to indigenous people in Chiapas and how their struggle for autonomy was an important way for them to take their futures into their own hands. They also mentioned how the increase in militarization was a way for the government not only to put pressure and

intimidate the Zapatista communities but also to set the foundation for what they eventually wanted out of Chiapas, a place for investment and the extraction of resources by multinational corporations. They asked us where we were from and when we told them that we were Chicanos, they quickly responded with knowledge of Chicano history in the United States and the issues over land and racial justice that were part of the Chicano experience in the United States. I remember asking them how they knew so much of the history of Chicanos in the United States. They mentioned that part of building autonomy was reading about different struggles throughout the world. They also mentioned how different groups had come through Oventik from the United States and shared their stories about what immigrants and other people of color in the United States face on a daily basis. I was deeply impressed with their knowledge of what we faced as people of color in the United States and somewhat embarrassed that my knowledge and understanding of geopolitics was not nearly as sophisticated as theirs.

ESTACIÓN LIBRE: ZAPATISMO AND A US "PEOPLE OF COLOR" POLITICS

I returned to the Bay Area changed by my experience in Chiapas. Upon arriving back to the states, I attended Zapatista reading groups and solidarity events throughout the Bay Area. These reading groups were made up of local radical activists, teachers, students, and artists who were inspired by the Zapatistas writings and who were interested in connecting different struggles affecting different groups in the Bay Area. The reading groups focused not only on Zapatista communiqués but also other readings and examples that were familiar and local to the lives of people in the Bay Area. In many cases we re-read the writings of Black Panther co-founder Huey P. Newton and Angela Davis. Using popular education methods, the reading groups analyzed the communiqués and readings and discussed their relevance to our lives as Chicanos, Blacks, Asians, and

white progressives. Our discussions also talked about what type of organizational models we thought were necessary in our organizing and collectives in order to achieve autonomy and self-determination. Many felt that the hierarchical organizing models that overwhelmed most of our collectives were keeping them from achieving greater gains in their organizing. By studying different direct-democratic consensus models, including the Zapatista model, the reading groups became a working laboratory for practicing the type of organizing we all wanted to be a part of. My participation was with the intention on returning back to Chiapas in the near future and continuing my Zapatista solidarity work. That opportunity would come up in December of 1998.

I kept in close contact with Miguel R. and Karl S. via email after I left Chiapas. They notified me that they would have a winter peace delegation in December. I applied to the Estación Libre winter delegation and participated in my first peace delegation to Zapatista communities. The 1998/1999 Estación Libre "People of Color" winter delegation became an even greater life changing experience than my first contact with a Zapatista community the summer before. The seventeen person delegation visited various Zapatista communities throughout the many regions of Chiapas. In each of the communities visited we were greeted by different Zapatista collectives and community members. We spoke to Zapatista women artisan collectives who presented on the role of Zapatista women in the Zapatista movement and how their increase participation in the communities was changing the gender power relations in their families and communities. They also shared how the autonomous artisan collectives were ways for women to discuss issues amongst themselves and to organize autonomously from the men. They emphasized how these spaces were important for the process of building autonomy.

We also spoke to community representatives that presented on the building and infrastructure of the Zapatista autonomous municipalities. They mentioned how

Zapatista governance was based on community discussion and consensus and how decisions were made only after careful consultation and discussion by members of communities. Since their arrival onto the national and international scene, the Zapatistas have promoted popular democratic participation with their motto of "*mandar obedeciendo*" (leading by obeying). The community representatives were showing us how this operated in their communities and how the larger structure of Zapatista governance was dependent on community participation.

At each community we visited and stayed a night, we had scheduled discussions between the delegates. Separated around discussions on racism, war, sexism, and solidarity, our discussions were a mixture of reflection from the talks we had with Zapatista community members and our own personal experience and analysis of what we faced in the United States as a person of color. Although we racially identified ourselves differently, some of us Chicanos, others Black, or African American, or Asian American, we started to discuss how a US "people of color" identity could bridge our experiences and make for a more effective and complex analysis of racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia in our communities. We saw how the Zapatistas themselves were made up of different ethnic indigenous groups –tzetzal, tzotzil, tojolobal, and chol—and how through this pluri-ethnic organizing of indigenous groups the Zapatistas were able to show us how to build broad alliances through difference.

One of the most impactful discussions was on racism and warfare. During our trips to communities we encountered various military roadblocks, drove and walked by a countless number of military barracks, and drove alongside heavily armed military vehicles. Such an example of militarization and intimidation on the indigenous communities of Chiapas was done to scare communities from joining the Zapatistas or question the policies of the different political parties in Chiapas. We discussed what we

saw and experienced within the context of low intensity militarization of barrios and ghettos in the United States. We attempted to avoid comparing the experiences of people living in the barrios and ghettos of the United States with the indigenous communities of Chiapas, but saw parallels that intersected. Just like our elders had done during the 1960's when they theorized the barrio and ghetto as an "internal colony", we mapped how racism and genocide were common experiences between both groups. This was an entry for Estación Libre delegates to make an intervention that was overshadowed and neglected by the United States and international Left. For delegates, an analysis of neoliberal capitalism was inherently one that included racism and genocide. We saw the Zapatista struggle as one not only against the latest stage of capitalism but one that was against the continued appearance of racism and colonialism on the lives of Mayan Indians in Chiapas. This resonated greatly with the anti-racist struggles of many of our delegates who worked against the Prison Industrial Complex or against the gentrification of their neighborhoods.

RESEARCHING ZAPATISMO AND CHICANISMO

After the delegation, I continued to work with Estación Libre, helping it form as a transnational collective that had its headquarters in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas but had the majority of its members living in the United States. The Estación Libre collective grew as we continued organizing delegations in Chiapas and political actions in the United States. What we found early on was that many of our delegates were from diverse backgrounds and worked on different issues facing people of color in the United States. Some were school teachers who organized alongside students for school equity; others were community organizers from Chicago, New York, Oakland, Los Angeles, New Orleans and Raleigh Durham, working on issues of environmental justice, women's

reproductive rights, police brutality, gentrification, and community empowerment. Such a diverse group of people made Estación Libre's early development an exciting process to be a part of.

By 2000, I entered graduate school at the University of Texas Austin with the intention of researching the relationship between US people of color and the Zapatistas. The political climate in the United States started to shift to the right with the election of George W. Bush as president of the United States, making political organizing a criminalized activity. In Mexico, an ex-executive of Coca-Cola and ex-governor of the state of Guanajuato, Vicente Fox Quesada, became the first non-PRI candidate to win a post-Revolutionary election. Fox (2000-present) corresponded to the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN), a right of center political party. His charismatic presence sold many Mexicans to a new alternative to the turbulent decade of the 90's. He reassured that the conflict in Chiapas would be handled in "fifteen minutes" and that prosperity would reach the entire country.

The Zapatistas responded to Fox's claim of handling the conflict in Chiapas in "fifteen minutes" by denouncing the continuous presence of military in or near Zapatista communities. The Zapatistas again announced that they would not come back to the table of negotiations if the three signs of peace were not fulfilled by Fox. Fox replied by slowly releasing many of the Zapatista political prisoners but not all of them. He also removed the seven military camps the Zapatistas wanted out of Chiapas, but simultaneously relocated the camps to other strategic parts of the state. As for the passing of the San Andrés Accords, in the spring of 2001, the Zapatista *comandancia* organized a caravan out of Chiapas and toured the Mexican countryside in order to gain national and international support for the passing of the San Andrés Accords. The caravan culminated in a march on Mexico City's main square. The march resembled the

Mexican revolutionary march by Mexican iconic figures: Francisco "Pancho" Villa and Emiliano Zapata. Over 200,000 people from throughout Mexico and the world witnessed the historic event.

Following the emotional march on Mexico City, the Zapatistas asked for a forum with the Mexican National Congress in order to demand for the signing of the San Andrés Accords at the national level. Although the majority of the national representatives failed to show up, EZLN Insurgente Mayor Ana Maria, gave a passionate speech demanding the passing of the San Andres Accords. In response, President Fox sent the proposed San Andrés Accords to congress knowing that the Accords would be chopped down and reduced. The Zapatista leadership returned to Chiapas with no prospects of making the San Andrés Accords law.

Later in the year, the fast-tracked and watered down version of an indigenous rights bill all but ended the hope of passing the San Andrés Accords (the government changed most of the implicit calls for regional autonomy and instead reduced it to community level forms of autonomy). As a result, the Zapatistas were forced back into seclusion. For almost three years (2001-2004) the Zapatistas kept a silence from the public eye, working internally on strengthening the Zapatista autonomous municipalities throughout most of Chiapas.

The 2001/2002 Estación Libre "People of Color" delegation became the focus of my Masters thesis titled, Estación Libre: Zapatismo, Chicanismo, and People of Color Politics in Chiapas (2003). It also sparked my interest in finding out more about the Chicana/o participation within these delegations to Chiapas. Overwhelmingly, Estación Libre delegations were made up of Chicana/o and Latina/o activists from the United States. Many of these Chicana/o and Latina/o activists and community organizers worked out of the greater Los Angeles area. Although it became a concern of Estación

Libre that mostly Chicanas/os were applying to delegations, these delegates were representatives of different Zapatista-inspired autonomous spaces, a growing trend in cities like Los Angeles, California. Delegates were coming to Chiapas with greater knowledge of the Zapatistas and with a more refined and focused agenda of building alliances between people of color and Zapatista communities. Many of the Chicana/o delegates had participated in global protests like the 1999 Seattle protests and were connected in various political networks that spanned five continents. Conversations still tended to focus on the identity politics that plagued much of our organizing in the United States but it also was heavily focused on understanding "autonomy" and "autonomous organizing."

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade center in New York shifted the national politics towards an increase concern over security and American exceptionalism, making our trips to Chiapas a much more difficult task. Delegates, including myself, had experiences with US customs officers questioning what they were doing in Mexico and where they had visited while they were abroad. On one occasion, I was interrogated about my trip to Chiapas for over two hours in Mexico City and then again in Houston. Chicanas/os who saw a much more intimate connection with the Zapatista struggle because it was a Mexican struggle; saw these increases in security measures as a way to scare ethnic Mexicans born in the United States from participating in a growing transnational politics over the future of Mexico.

By August 2003, I attended as part of a summer Estación Libre delegation another important event in the Zapatista territories. After two years of silence, the Zapatistas once again appeared on the (inter)national scene with their symbolic closing of their political/cultural centers, or Aguascalientes, and the opening of their new autonomous centers, the Zapatista Caracoles. Renouncing the 2001 Indigenous rights law, the

Zapatistas informed those in attendance at the opening of the new Caracol in Oventik, that they "would not ask permission" to pursue autonomy in Chiapas. Besides denouncing the government for passing the indigenous rights law in 2001, they proclaimed a new structure of governance throughout the Zapatista territories. Calling them the "*Juntas de Buen Gobierno*," the Zapatistas ushered in a new era in the struggle for indigenous autonomy and rights in Mexico. For Estación Libre collective members, the Zapatistas emergence from their three year seclusion was an example of the type of organizing necessary to build a long and sustainable movement that saw autonomy as a continuous process of achieving self-determination.

By 2007, Estación Libre collective members reflected on our time in Chiapas and felt it was time to disband as a collective and close our operations in San Cristobal de las Casas. It was a difficult decision for the core group of members that kept the "orange house" operational for almost ten years. Over two hundred activists, students, educators, community organizers, artists, and musicians of color from the United States had participated in either an Estación Libre peace or work delegation. Of those two hundred, dozens went on to open their own autonomous spaces in the cities they came from. Others used the conversations they had with other people of color and the Zapatistas to inform their own work in the United States or to help start off shoot radical and progressive collectives. Its goal of achieving a formidable radical "US people of color" politics in the United States may not have achieved the cohesiveness it attempted to organize due to its inability to define whether it was a collective or network or a hybrid of both. But it did bring to the forefront of many solidarity circles the question of race and racism still prevalent in transnational organizing. It also brought an international politics that was sorely missing in local US people of color organizing. The social struggles of indigenous peoples in Chiapas, the Philippines, or Palestine, became intersecting

struggles with the struggles faced by communities of color in the United States. Personally, within those nine years working with Estación Libre, I worked as an active member of their coordinating committee, participated and facilitated in over six delegations to Chiapas, and spent every summer and winter in San Cristobal de las Casas, helping the Estación Libre coordinators with delegations and solidarity projects with Zapatista communities. The work I did with Estación Libre and the people I met along the way broadened my understanding of Zapatismo, autonomy, Chicano politics, and a forming people of color politics. It complimented my own local student and community organizing in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Austin. It also informed my Ph.D. research interests in Chicana/o identity formation, social movements, and the anthropology of the Mexico/US borderlands at the University of Texas at Austin. This dissertation is an intervention in a political project that I have participated in since 1994 and that I continue to find resonance with today.

INTRODUCTION

Sub-Comandante Marcos during the October 19th 2006 meetings in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico

On October 19th, 2006, in the old burned down remains of a once standing Mexican movie theater turned into an open-air musical auditorium in downtown Tijuana, over five hundred Chicanos, Mexicanos, and other groups from the United States and Mexico gathered to share their "*palabra*", or spoken word, with the famous rebel spokesperson for the EZLN (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*), Sup-comandante Marcos (also known as *Delegado Zero*). The *encuentro* or encounter was the second day of meetings with the rebel leader in the sprawling border city of Tijuana, Baja California. The day prior, in the same location, numerous Mexican *maquiladora* workers, labor organizers, students, community organizers, and representatives from

other radical organizations, spoke about their experiences resisting and living in Tijuana, and made a pledge to continue struggling within what is called *La Otra Campaña Mexicana*, or in English, "the Mexican Other Campaign."

Since the summer of 2005, the Zapatista-initiated "Other Campaign" had convened grassroots organizations, collectives, and communities from both sides of the US/Mexico border to coordinate a national movement towards rewriting the Mexican constitution under the umbrella banner of "to the left and from below." Constructing along the way, an anti-capitalist and anti-political party platform, the Other Campaign's caravan arrival to Tijuana was part of a long countrywide "listening" tour of every state in Mexico, ending with their visit to the Mexican northern border region, with stops along several major border entry cities like Tijuana, Mexicali, Juarez, and Nuevo Laredo.

A result of recent trans-border encounters between grassroots organizations, *maquiladora* workers rights groups, indigenous communities from Baja California, and several Southern California networks of Mexican and Chicana/o collectives and organizations, the meetings in Tijuana reflected the outcome of over twelve years of Zapatista-inspired political and cultural activism and solidarity along the Mexico/US border zone that for two days came together and shared their experiences and testimonies with the *Delegado Zero*. The Chicana/o participants from the United States, in particular, relied on not only on what made Chicanos and Mexicanos living in "*el otro lado*" or "on the other side" of the border, different from their conceptual counterparts, Mexicanos living in Mexico, but they also spoke on how the Zapatistas, over the last twelve years, had influenced and inspired a growing cultural politics unique to the lives of ethnic Mexicans living in the United States. Through poetry, spoken word, *testimonios*/testimonies, song, rap, art, music, dance, and guerrilla theater, the Chicanas/os that attended from the United States shared with the *Delegado Zero*, the

political and cultural impact a localized indigenous uprising and movement from the mountains and jungles of Chiapas, Mexico could have on communities across the world.

During the sunny late October afternoon, *Delegado Zero*, writing notes on a table while sitting in a small chair on stage, was reminded several times by speakers from Los Angeles, California, that nine years prior to the Tijuana meetings, over one hundred-twenty Los Angeles-based Chicana/o activists, artists, and musicians traveled thousands of miles and participated in a similar encounter with the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. The August 1997 Zapatista and Chicana/o Cultural Encounter is considered by many in Los Angeles as the watershed moment where the intensification of Chicana/o solidarity efforts with the Zapatistas shifted to a more pronounced attempt at Zapatista-inspired autonomy and autonomous organizing in Los Angeles. As one Chicana attendee recalls of the 1997 encounter, "we asked them how we can help from the belly of the beast and they responded, 'by continuing to struggle as women and men in your own communities.' So we came back to Los Angeles and organized towards autonomy."

Over ten years since the 1997 encuentro have passed. Having grown in numbers from the original 120 participants, Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o autonomy and autonomous organizing in Los Angeles, California has built an intricate tightly-knit political, social, and cultural network of artists, musicians, activists, community organizers, collectives, organizations, and community spaces that conceptualizes "autonomy" and "autonomous organizing" as a viable alternative to political reformism and neoliberal capitalism. This dissertation is an ethnographic reflection of Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o autonomy and autonomous organizing in Los Angeles, California. It investigates the origins of this form of community organizing by Chicanas/os and other ethnic Mexicans and Latinos in Los Angeles, California. It also follows ethnographically an emerging facet of Zapatista-inspired political work, the growth of autonomous

political organizing amongst Chicana/o and Mexicana/o political activists, artists, and musicians throughout the greater Los Angeles area.

This dissertation, titled, "Autonomy Road: the Cultural Politics of Chicana/o Autonomous Organizing in Los Angeles, California," investigates the emergence of Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o autonomous organizing through a multi-sited ethnography on one self-identified autonomous collective in Los Angeles, California, namely the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE in the northeast enclave of El Sereno. It investigates what material and historical conditions are attributed to the rise in autonomous organizing by Chicanas/os, what political and cultural resonance from the Zapatista movement has captured the hearts and minds of Chicanas/os, why has this transnational resonance been so affective in Los Angeles, and how has it been articulated in the production of autonomy and autonomous organizing over the last twelve years within the mostly Chicano, Mexicano, and Latino barrios in Los Angeles? At first glance, Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activism and community organizing by Chicano, Mexicano, and Latino communities have led to innovative strategies towards combating housing gentrification, economic restructuring, racial and ethnic cleansing, environmental pollution in low-income areas, and mass xenophobic hysteria against a large migrant population. These strategies are symbolic of a growing discontent against the expanding racial and class disparity between many racialized ethnic Mexican Angelinos and other racialized groups in the region. In response to these disparities, Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activism and community organizing, or what I refer to as Chicana/o urban Zapatismo, breaks from the identity politics and single issue-based struggles that have been relatively ineffective against the structural changes and injustices occurring throughout the city of Los Angeles and the Southern California region. Instead, Chicana/o urban Zapatismo attempts at bridging a dialogue with social justice

movements for “immigrant rights”, “racial justice”, “food sovereignty”, “environmental justice”, and “labor rights” in Southern California through an articulated discourse of “autonomy” and “autonomous organizing.”

At best, Chicana/o urban Zapatismo is a result of various local, statewide, national, and international social movements that capture the global trend in urban and rural areas towards constructing locally rooted participatory and democratic methods of organizing that are “horizontal” and that mobilize against such far-reaching processes as racism and global capitalism. As social scientist, John Holloway (2004) points out, the "(re) construction of community bonds has, therefore, been a central concern of the movement in the cities...the construction of social centres or alternative cafes, the coming together of people in informal and changing movements create new patterns of community and mutual trust which are part and parcel of the development of councilist forms of organization."

This dissertation claims that the development of “Chicana/o urban Zapatismo” over the last 12 years by Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activists, artists, musicians, and community organizers involves working towards the political and social production of anti-racist and anti-capitalist “autonomy” by racialized ethnic Mexicans and Latinos in Los Angeles, California. By using an “observing participant” approach, this ethnographic study suggests that by uncovering the everyday relationships and tensions between Chicano autonomous organizers in northeast Los Angeles and their conceptual counterparts, Mexicans, Latinos, and Blacks in the greater Los Angeles area, researchers looking at the production of different forms of structural inequalities in urban areas may derive a greater understanding of social (re)organization, recomposition, and mobilization by a growing, diverse, and historically marginalized group like Chicanos in the United States.

THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

Understanding and mapping the cultural politics produced by Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o, Mexicana/o, and Latina/o autonomous organizers in Los Angeles, California over the last twenty years involves a thorough theoretical and analytical discussion on two central themes. These central themes emerge from my two years of ethnographic fieldwork with Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o autonomous organizers in Los Angeles, California and from their own political histories dating back two decades. The first of these central themes is a discussion on the current age of neoliberalism and neoliberal capitalism, its global, national, regional, and local reach, and its naturalization as everyday capitalist social relations. Secondly, knowledge on how race, racism, and racial violence operate in the context of Southern California and Los Angeles is an important in order to differentiate how ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles have navigated the racial/social order of the region uniquely from other racialized ethnic groups.

These two central themes provide an ample background for the examination of historical trends in social movements through the lens of Chicana/o identity formation that opens this dissertation in Chapter 1 and contextualizes the last thirty years of political, social, and economic changes to Los Angeles that Chapter 2, 3, and 4 situate within the production of Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o cultural politics. Finally these two central themes are always under scrutiny and placed in tension with the daily practice of "autonomy" and "autonomous organizing" by Chicana/o urban Zapatistas in Los Angeles, California. The hope from these tensions is that a space may open for the formation of new forms of resistance by political subjectivities and identities that live in a global city like Los Angeles, California.

NEOLIBERALISM AND NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM

This section interrogates "neoliberalism" and "neoliberal capitalism" as processes that have shaped the contours of everyday life in Los Angeles, California. During in-depth interviews and ethnographic fieldwork with Chicana/o urban Zapatistas, the latest stage of capitalism, neoliberal capitalism, became an important point of reference and topic of conversation. Although it did not appear in their daily vernacular when speaking about autonomy until after the Zapatistas came onto the international scene in 1994, an analysis of neoliberal capitalism's development on a global, transnational, regional, and the local level became a crucial process towards understanding what Chicana/o activists, artists, and community organizers were up against in Los Angeles, California.[4]

David Harvey defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade." (Harvey, 2005: 9) In this case, neoliberalism as the latest phase of capitalist accumulation emerges out of the contradiction between the welfare-state and the need by capital to increase profit margins and wealth. A set of scholars suggest that under these conditions, the state becomes more of a facilitator for the creation of markets and greater profit margins. (Harvey, 2005; Giroux, 2004) Instead of the decline or disappearance of the state under neoliberalism, as some scholars would suggest, the state is needed to reassure these conditions whether

[4] This is not to infer that the Zapatistas and the 1994 Zapatista rebellion are the sole reason why Chicana/o activists began to use the word, "neoliberalism", especially since labor movements in Los Angeles, California also used "neoliberal capitalism" and "neoliberalism" when identifying the current stage of capitalism and coloniality. Other examples are the continental indigenous and peasant movements characterized as new social movements that contested structural adjustment programs in countries across the Americas. For ethnic Mexican communities, this includes the initial battle against the Carlos Salinas de Gortari policies to reshape the Mexican Constitution and his support for the North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

through less taxes, deregulation, privatization of public services, or war. In some cases, like those of developing countries, neoliberal reforms are mandated by multinational organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund due to large amounts of debt to these organizations. The state, in this case, is forced to change laws that regulate capital, privatize public services, and create the infrastructure for future markets to flourish. In developed countries like the United States, this shift appears in the form of de-industrialization of the urban core, strengthening of private property rights, structural adjustment and austerity policies that are aimed at diminishing the social safety net for most citizens.

Scholars and grassroots intellectuals writing on neoliberalism contend that in most cases neoliberal ideology takes flight globally during the early 1970's at a moment of economic crisis. (De Angelis, 2008; Giroux, 2004) This first phase is conceptualized as the infrastructural period for neoliberalism. Under this period, most countries suffering from the 1973 global depression were forced to structurally adjust legal, financial, and institutional regulations in order to make way for the free flow of capital. Such countries like Mexico began the long process of first purchasing failing private industries due to the depression and then requesting large amounts of loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in order to keep these industries afloat. After these industries failed to recuperate, Mexico was forced to privatize many of these national industries and social services and lay the ground for free trade zones where new forms of flexible industries owned by multinational corporations could operate free of taxes or regulations. In Los Angeles, California this is most apparent during the 1970's and early 1980's as the city underwent a tremendous de-centralization and de-industrialization of its traditional industries and a vigorous attack on the civil rights gains of the 1960's. In the Mexican case, the end result was a mass exodus of people, mostly rural peasants and

urban workers, who saw a drop in subsidies to farms and unemployment in the factories. Many of these people were forced to migrate to the growing financial metropoles of the North like Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York. Los Angeles, California as a growing city of foreign born residents became the gateway and endpoint to millions of migrants from Mexico, Latin America, and Asia.

The 1980's and 1990's ushered in the second phase of neoliberalism. This is considered a phase which focuses on the globalization of capital and the emergence of the metropolitan city as a global node within the modern capitalist world system. Whereas in prior eras, competition between nation-states over trade, production, and finance were the norm, the latest stage of global capitalism focused on the creation of financial centers that housed multi-national banks, corporations, and financial firms. On the other hand, in this phase, a megacity like Los Angeles, which holds a strategic geographic location to a cheap labor source from Latin American and Asia, makes it a prime location for new immigrant populations that arrive to work in the city's new flexible labor markets. An increase in cheap expendable labor that concentrated in the abandoned urban cores of cities like Los Angeles, California created a greater division of wealth, where affluent and middle-class communities moved outward from the urban core and these new transnational populations moved into communities left behind.

Finally, the current phase of neoliberalism focuses on the disciplinary forms of governance that appear from the uneven implementation of neoliberal reforms and markets throughout Los Angeles. This phase focuses on the self-disciplining and self-managed individual operating within the global marketplace. In order to reach this level of self-governance or personal responsibility, the state must create the necessary mechanisms to convince its citizens that cuts on spending for social services is necessary for economic stability. The state does so by privatizing public services and dismantling

the social safety net for everyone. Here the focus is on creating a new type of citizen that is responsible for his/her well being and is personally responsible for his/her upward mobility. These three phases of neoliberal capitalism have changed the political, social, and economic contours of life in Los Angeles, California over the last thirty years.

Los Angeles: Globalization and the Global City

This dissertation is concerned with the changes occurring in the city of Los Angeles during the last three decades. This includes its introduction during the 1980's and 1990's as the next "global city" and its gradual investment in neoliberal reforms during the 1990's up until the present. Historically, most post-WWII industrial cities, the likes of New York, Chicago, and Detroit operated under a version of the Keynesian economic paradigm. Seen as a way to regulate capitalism, offer a social safety net, and stabilize wages for labor in order to squelch and undermine unions, Keynesianism in most US cities gave the appearance of narrowing the gap between rich and poor in the United States. As Bello points out, "The Keynesian economic paradigm was a social compromise among contending classes that placed limits on the operation of the market. Its widespread adoption in the postwar period by elites in both the global North and South was explained by the need to create a stable social base in order to contain the potential for global social revolution." (Bello, 2004: 19) Such promises like full employment, livable wages, and upward mobility are key components of the Keynesian economic paradigm. On the other hand, the city of Los Angeles never fully embraced the Keynesian economic paradigm like most cities in the United States. (Sides, 2003) Its history of racialized labor segmentation positioned particular groups to receive the fruits of the post-WWII "welfare-state," while others continued working in non-unionized low wage industries. This discrepancy resulted in some of the strongest pluri-ethnic labor

union organizing, both formal and informal organizing, and some of the most dyer working conditions faced by a large vulnerable population of workers and field laborers.

As discussed in the prior section, with the advent of the neoliberal capitalist era in the United States during the late 1970's and early 1980's, the last remnants of the Keynesian economic paradigm were replaced with the neoliberal capitalist paradigm. The term post-Keynesian is used in this case to articulate a particular shift in the state/labor/capital relationship that existed during most of the post-WWII era. As stated earlier, in the neoliberal capitalist era, the state, in particular, functions not as a negotiator or mediator between capital and labor but instead as a facilitator for capital's expansion and search for new markets.

The neoliberalization of the greater Los Angeles, California area emerges in a different fashion than in most "global cities." Unlike other metropolitan areas, Los Angeles is unique in that it was the only city in the United States to deindustrialize its heavy manufacturing sector, during the late 1970's and early 1980's, only to have a parallel shift in reindustrialization of two new forms of manufacturing industries. The first of these new industries was a flexible, decentralized, mobile, and light manufacturing industry of garments, electronics, and low tech products. The second was the creation of a highly skilled technological and informational industry that was geographically placed outside of the urban core area of Los Angeles. Coupled with a new and expanding service sector to fill the unskilled labor needs of Los Angeles' financial and media centers, the post-Keynesian neoliberal economy that emerges during the late 1970's and early 1980's symbolizes the growing polarization of wealth in Los Angeles, California. I use the coupling of the terms "post-Keynesian" with "neoliberalism" in order to emphasize the shifting relationship between the state, capital, and labor in a neoliberal era. Of this shifting relationship, the role of the state is one of the most

important factors for the integration of neoliberal strategies and techniques. Under a "post-Keynesian neoliberal state," the role of the state functions not as a mediator between capital and labor but as a facilitator for the expansion and creation of markets.

Edward Soja (1996) suggests that this polarization of wealth in Los Angeles reflects an "hour glass class structure," where the new corporate and highly-skilled industries are relocated to upper middle-class to middle-class communities on the peripheries of the city. In contrast, the low-end low-tech industries are located in the urban core where most of the poor and working class communities are located. This particular trend develops as late as the early 1980's, where over two-thirds of the manufacturing jobs in Los Angeles were lost in well-paying unionized industries like the automobile, aerospace, rubber, and electronic industries.

Virtually overnight, white, black, and brown blue-collar workers lost their jobs and most of their pensions as companies moved to the Global South. From 1979 to 1995, over forty-five million jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector throughout the United States. (Barlow, 66) In Los Angeles, where you always had a high percentage of well-paying unionized jobs alongside non-unionized work, the loss of these industrial jobs did not mean the placement of traditional workers into the new flexible industries that replaced the old heavy manufacturing industries. Instead, the non-unionized low-wage jobs were mostly filled by a new population of immigrants arriving from Mexico, Latin America, and Asia, many of them undocumented and affected by the integration of neoliberal reforms to their countries of origin. Most of this labor force is extremely gendered as immigrant women in general are hired to work these urban "maquiladoras" or sweatshops across the city.

The shift from heavy manufacturing to light and flexible forms of production also coincided with the growth of new sectors. The service sector and the Prison Industrial

Sector helped replace the large number of jobs lost due to the de-industrialization of the urban core. The emergence of Los Angeles as a "global city" and a financial node in the modern capitalist world-system, created a new international division of labor where the financial bankers and brokers filled the offices of the reconstructed downtown area of Los Angeles and an unskilled labor force of mostly immigrants serviced the offices and buildings as janitors, maintenance personnel, and cleaners. Tied to the financial sectors are other business sectors, like the expanding entertainment and tourism industries in Los Angeles. Mexican and Latino immigrants filled many of the jobs within these industries as chamber maids, servants, and food servers.

With the flight of the heavy manufacturers also came the loss of one of Southern California's main industries, the military industrial complex. Although military spending increased throughout the 1980's in the United States, only certain high-tech aspects of the military industrial complex stayed in Los Angeles while military base closing and the manufacturing aspect left to cheaper areas. In its place, a new industry sprouted during the 1980's to fill the loss of wages for many Angelinos.

The Prison Industrial Complex, for instance, has immensely shaped the contours of everyday life in Los Angeles, Southern California, and California. Ruth Wilson Gilmore discusses the rise of the Prison Industrial Complex in greater detail, in her book, Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California. (2007) For Wilson Gilmore, the emergence and reproduction of the Prison Industrial Complex in California is due to various surpluses in labor, population, and state land distribution. For one, the loss of well-paying unionized jobs left many people unemployed. The creation of prisons and jails became an overnight industry for a parallel shift in policing and incarceration of poor communities of color. The construction of prisons, the maintenance of prisons, and the guarding of prison inmates became a new industry that tied private

interests with the interests of the state. Secondly, with the lack of job opportunities for many people living in poor and working class communities and the dismantlement of social services offered to these vulnerable populations, crime increased as policing of these inner city neighborhoods also increased. The jailing of people became a profitable industry that fulfilled the private sector's need for creating new markets and society's need to imprison and criminalize those most in need. Indeed, Gilmore argues that in the age of globalized capital, "the expansion of prison constitutes a geographical solution to socio-economic problems, politically organized by the state which is itself in the process of radical restructuring." (Wilson Gilmore, 2007)

By the time of the 1992 Los Angeles rebellions, the city of Los Angeles and its peripheral areas had rapidly built itself as the next great "global city", the likes of New York, London, and Tokyo. Coined by social geographer, Saskia Sassen, in 1984, to symbolize a significant shift in the economies of countries, regions, and cities across the world, the global city appears after a series of economic, political, and social crises within the previous world social order that operated much of the 20th century. It is safe to say that the use of the term "global city" to identify Los Angeles, California gains greater momentum during the 1990's than in any other period.

Yet, Los Angeles newfound identity as a "global city" does not come without contradictions. The 1992 rebellions might have uncovered the changing demographic makeup of Los Angeles, California as a receiving city for people from the Global South, making it a global destination for a polarized labor force of unskilled and highly educated workers and a center for flexible forms of industrial production, or as one of the global entertainment and media capitals of the world, but it also had some of the poorest urban communities in the country. (Valle and Torres, 1998) In this model, communities and enclaves that house these new transnational populations of flexible and expendable

workers are not only located in the abandoned remains of the de-industrialized urban core but are heavily policed areas where these new flexible industries are located. Much of this polarization and inequality in wealth is attributed to various economic, political, and social shifts in policies and governance starting in the mid 1970's, gaining strength throughout the 1980's, and eventual prominence during the 1990's and 2000's.

Neoliberal Governance and Capitalist Social Relations

If as some scholars on the "global city" suggest, trends in cities are caused by the broader organization of advanced economies, for example, from fordism to post-fordism or from heavy industrial manufacturing to flexible manufacturing, (Sassen, 1998) then what this dissertation is interested in is the everyday social relations that are produced from these shifts in organization and the methods of governance on space used to control these populations. Transitioning to neoliberal strategies, in a metropolitan city like Los Angeles, is an uneven process at best. Such an uneven process results in different capitalist social relations appearing as natural only through the neoliberalization of various institutions and structures of power that operate as facilitators and stewards of new markets. In this model, local government officials and administrators are better suited as market analysts since they are in charge of making sure private property rights and corporate interests are protected and new markets are possible for investment. Since collective rights have been rapidly dismantled at a national and state level, cities become battlegrounds for managing "unruly" populations and at the same time furthering individual rights centered not on social freedoms and rights but market opportunities and security.

Literature on neoliberalism is focused on its relationship to the proliferation of the free-market capitalist system during an age of globalization. (De Angelis, 2008) This

literature traces the development of neoliberal ideology and governance as it is produced from a significant global shift and crisis in capitalist accumulation. This dissertation understands that neoliberal capitalism cannot be solely understood through the lens of economic development. The current neoliberal moment must also include a discussion on the social relations it produces and the consequences of those normative social relations on populations throughout Los Angeles, California.

Capitalist social relations, or what Massimo De Angelis calls, "value practices" (De Angelis, 2007: 29) in an age of neoliberal capitalism are crucial to understand for Chicana/o urban Zapatistas working on autonomy. The day to day work of autonomous organizers involves identifying, understanding, and dismantling the daily social relations that further neoliberal ideology. Because this anti-capitalist process is an everyday task for Chicana/o urban Zapatistas, understanding how capitalist value practices operate and manufacture consent for the furthering of capital accumulation become essential points of reference for anti-capitalist struggles.

Perspectives on capitalist social relations focus on the individual and its relationship to the market under neoliberalism. These perspectives have grown prevalent over the last thirty years as a culture of capitalism has transformed everyday life throughout the modern world system. Where under the modern nation-state perspective the individual is a free and sovereign subject that makes up our contemporary understanding of citizenship and the citizen-subject, the neoliberal shifts the focus from the individual as a "free" and "sovereign" subject to one that is constantly constrained by social commons offered by the state. Within this perspective, individuals must be free to exercise their autonomy as consumers within a global marketplace. The state on the other hand, gets in the way from individuals within the nation-state to exercise their freedom as a "homo economicus" by creating barriers to trade, taxing individuals and

corporations, and regulating the open market. Under neoliberalism, this perspective contends that freedom of the market is the best solution to society's ills and failures. In the eyes of neoliberal capitalism, such wasteful expenditures on social services are only beneficial if they depend on the market form. That is, social services are useful only if they are privatized and regulated by the market not the state.

If the question over capitalist social relations in this stage of capitalism is over freedom and choice, then neoliberal capitalism wants populations to be free consumers of goods. Globalization in this case is the global interdependence of individuals as consumers. Neoliberal capitalism suggests that due to the free flow of capital and information, consumers have a greater freedom to choose from products that are produced anywhere in the world. Global interdependence in this case does not mean identifying the ways in which the new international division of labor operates between consumers and producers but instead sees our relationship to one another as a business transaction. These perspectives on social relations focus solely on the individual and on individual freedom within the parameters of the nation-state and the marketplace. They limit our understanding of a plurality of differences within the nation-state model of the unitary subject and contend that only through our participation in the capitalist marketplace will our lives improve. Social movements across the Americas have questioned these basic assumptions and instead offered alternative views on autonomy. This dissertation places itself in conversation with these autonomous social movements, which I will cover in the following sections.

RACE, NEOLIBERAL WHITE SUPREMACY, AND SPATIAL RACISM IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles is one of the most written about and researched cities in the world. Studies conducted on its changing political, economic, and social landscapes reflect

larger global restructuring processes that affect both urban and rural areas across the world in distinctly different ways. (Soja and Scott, 1996) Its position as a major global node within the modern capitalist world system reflects its attraction to capital and dispossessed communities from the Global South.

According to the 2009 population estimates by the California Department of Finance, the city of Los Angeles and all of its 498.3 square miles has a population of 4,065,585 people. This is an increase from the 2000 US census data which had the population of Los Angeles at a growing 3,694,820 people. In contrast, the broader county of Los Angeles, which incorporates over 88 cities including the city of Los Angeles, has over 10,393,185 people.

In terms of the racial makeup of the city, the 2000 US census calculates that 46.9% of all Angelinos are white, 46.5% are Hispanic or Latino, 11.2% are African American, 10.5% are Asian American, 0.8% are Native American, 0.2% are Pacific Islander, 25.7% from other races, and 5.2% from two or more races. The racial/ethnic and economic breakdown of the city provides a deceiving picture of a city that is multicultural for all intents and purposes. A closer look at these demographic numbers show that although there is no clear majority in the city, the city and county are demographically segregated into de-centered enclaves, small cities, and communities. This creates an urban landscape that has no particular plan or vision besides protecting against or insulating the awkward racial/social/economic borders of these enclaves and communities. Such inequalities are the backdrop to recent autonomous organizing within ethnic Mexican and Latino communities in Los Angeles, California.

The popular imagination of Los Angeles is predicated upon a long-established view about "race." While economic changes over the last thirty years gives us insight to emerging forms of governance and social relations that are dependent on the market,

"race" and the fixed, unchanging, and unchangeable meaning it gives to the order of racialized groups and communities in Los Angeles capture the history of the expanding city over the last one hundred years. This dissertation is concerned with how these fixed and unchanging meanings of race are created and used to build an intricate social hierarchy of space in Los Angeles. Such uneven political, economic, and social processes like neoliberalism do not operate in Los Angeles without intersecting with the dominant racial ideologies, hierarchies, and regimes of the region. In the case of Los Angeles, like most US cities, white supremacy holds reign. Invoking Dylan Rodríguez definition, I understand white supremacy to "be understood as a logic of social organization that produces regimented, institutionalized, and militarized conceptions of hierarchized 'human' difference" (Rodríguez, 2006, 11). Based on this working definition of "white supremacy" I argue that the fundamental American ideals of individualism or individual autonomy and private property ownership, (Harris, 1993) is intensified during the initial neoliberal era of the early 1970s to produce atomized individuals who have a varying degree of investment in "neoliberal white supremacy," which in the case of the greater Los Angeles area is the coupling of A) neoliberal capitalist strategies and ideologies on individual freedoms that are dictated and managed by the market, with B) the contemporary formation of post-US apartheid white supremacy, which is based on the liquidation and imprisonment of non-white bodies and communities. This process produces new strategies and techniques to govern communities of color based on the normalization of racialized capitalist social relations and the enclosure of space for the purpose of labor subordination and market creation.

The introduction of Los Angeles as the next great "global city" and its transformation into a "Latino metropolis" reorganizes not only the economic order of the city and region but also the racial/ethnic order. In this case, the dissertation is concerned

with theorizing the racialization of space throughout time in metropolitan cities like Los Angeles, California and the production of structural and everyday racism inside, through, and outside these spaces. The city of Los Angeles is a special case unlike any other city in the United States. Scholars studying Los Angeles suggest that the popular imagination of Los Angeles is predicated upon a long-established view about "race." (Valle and Torres, 1998; Escobar, 1999; Davis, 1998) Here "races" are fixed and given, unchanging and unchangeable. This dissertation challenges the social order that produces these fixed and given views on race in Los Angeles. Throughout this dissertation I use the terms "race", "racialization", "racism", and "racialized ethnicities" as opposed to the more widely written about use of the term "ethnicity" to discuss the ways in which different modes of social control, like the example of residential segregation that opens this chapter, operate under to create a socially constructed divide between groups based on their perceived biological and cultural differences. Race in this case is a social construct that operates in different ways depending on historical and social pressures within a given situation or context. More than a biological untruth, race is used to socially classify groups based on constructed phenotypical differences and perceived abnormalities that enforce and structure a dominant social order based on these mythic differences. (Omi and Winant, 1994; Winant, 2001) Race may be perceived, here, as privileging the more widely used "ethnicity", (which in the case of the United States has been used to characterize national-origin and in the Latin American context as a cultural marker) when discussing the history of ethnic Mexicans and Latinos in the United States and in Latin America, but this is further from the truth. I claim that both social constructs operate together in the United States as social, cultural, and biological myths in order to exploit, disenfranchise, and police, certain groups over others, based again on their perceived biological and cultural differences. Therefore, "racialization" and "racism" operate as a

re-inscription of these differences onto the individual and collective body that in turn are measured in society whether these racialized bodies are worthy of succeeding and living or doomed to die, or what Foucault coins, "making live and letting die." (Foucault, 2003: 239-263)

In this regard, Michel Foucault is the most well known theorist of this perspective on racism. In Foucault's famous conceptualization of power and biopower, during his stay at the College de France from 1975-1976, he writes,

> What in fact is racism? It is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die. The appearance within the biological continuum of the human race of races, the distinction among races, the hierarchy of races, the fact that certain races are described as good and that others, in contrast, are described as inferior: all this is a way of fragmenting the field of the biological that power controls. It is a way of separating out the groups that exist within a population. It is, in short, a way of establishing a biological-type caesura within a population that appears to be a biological domain.

He further adds,

> Racism also has a second function. Its role is, if you like, to allow the establishment of a positive relation of this type: "The more you kill, the more deaths you will cause" or " The very fact that you let more die will allow you to live more." I would say that this relation ("If you want to live, you must take lives, you must be able to kill") was not invented by either racism or the modern State. It is a relationship of war.

Here he distinguishes how war is a biological struggle with a unique reasoning that states, "The more inferior species die out, the more abnormal individuals are eliminated, the fewer degenerates there will be in the species as a whole, and the more I-as species rather than individual-can live, the stronger I will be, the more vigorous I will be. I will be able to proliferate."(Foucault, 2003:255) Racism in this case, is a "silent war" that works inside, outside, and within the State, (Foucault in his early writings and lectures stresses the State and the role of the state in controlling the production of

biopower or the ability to life, later on his writings he moves towards a more decentered approach at looking at the State) that more than a military or political battle, though it equally enters the field of war and the political, is a biological battle over the ability to survive where others must die.

Joy James, on the other hand, produces a convincing critique of Foucault's theorization of "racism" and racialized violence by critiquing one of his most famous books, *Displine and Punish*, on the grounds of centering the normalized white male body as the site of state control, policing, discipline, and torture. For James, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, "contributes to the erasure of racist violence" by universalizing the "body of the white, propertied male" as the site of racialization. It also "vanquishes historical and contemporary racialized terror, punishments, and control in the United States; it therefore distorts and obscures violence and control in the United States."(James, 1996:24) Moreover, her critique suggests that Foucault's negligence in discussing the racialized and sexualized forms of punishment that black, brown, and red bodies faced in the colonial conquest of the Americas, represents a serious erasure of the different forms of punishment and racialized state violence that followed the conquest of the Americas. Thus in his theorization of racism and more importantly in *Discipline and Punish*, power, Foucault manages to describe the ways in which society works under polarized social divisions and branding but fails to see how in "racialized societies such as the United States, the plague of criminality, deviancy, immorality, and corruption is embodied in the black because both sexual and social pathology are branded by skin color (as well as by gender and sexual orientation).

Other scholars similarly suggest thought provoking critiques on the origins of "racism" by placing significance on its use to further colonial and imperial conquest in the Americas. (Stoler, 1995; Quijano, 2000; Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991) This

perspective de-centers Foucault's focus on privileging the state and in many cases, the "nation-state" as the source of negative biopower or racism, and instead traces it to the colonial relationships between colonizer and the racialized colonial subject. It also focuses on such left out racialized and sexualized violences that were produced by the colonial encounter and conquest of non-European subjects. (Stoler, 1995) Many of these scholars also place the racial subordination of non-Europeans and whites in dialogue with their labor subordination in order to show how racialized forms of violence cannot be separated from gendered and economic forms of exploitation.

Both perspectives, offer insightful looks at theorizing race, racialization and racism in the context of racialized ethnic Mexicans in the United States, and in this dissertation, in Los Angeles. Chapter 1, for instance, will look at many of these concepts in terms of discussing how racialized ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles, southern California, and the United States faced different forms of racial violence and labor subordination and how they organized in response to these forms of violence sometimes in contradictory ways.

Neoliberal white Supremacy

This dissertation also emerges from the need to understand the formation of political identities forged from the intersection of neoliberal ideology and the re-fashioning of post-Civil Rights white supremacy in a global city like Los Angeles, California. Scholars looking at globalization and neoliberalism tend to overemphasize the role of capital(ism) in the production of neoliberal subjects and subjectivities within the global city. This perspective reduces social life to the hands of the market form and neglects other social forces that shape and govern society in general. Such social forces

as race and gender operate intertwined with capital to structure society and labor in a hierarchical manner.[5]

For instance, Latin American dependency theorists argue that the neoliberal globalization era is nothing but a continuation of previous forms of colonialism without the appearance of the old colonial administrations. Peruvian sociologists, Anibal Quijano, and world-systems theorist Emmanuel Wallerstein, in particular, contend that the current modern capitalist world system has residual characteristics to prior colonial systems of exploitation and classification around race. The new international division of labor that is predominantly in the "global south" and made up of poor women are the sites of these neo-colonial economic regimes. (Quijano, 2000; Grosfoguel, 2004; Mohanty, 2003)

Agreeing with Quijano and Wallerstein's assertions, I claim that my use of the term, "neoliberal white supremacy" is not to distinguish it apart from their position on coloniality and race in the modern capitalist world-system but instead to assert that the neoliberal globalization era involves the use of particular strategies and technologies that produce specific sets of social relations that are manufactured, dependent, and reproduced by the market form. In turn, these social relations that are predicated on the market and that reflect such values like individualism, property ownership, and the end to "big government" spending on social services are coalesced with the parallel production of whiteness, US coloniality, and post-Civil Rights white supremacy in the United States to reinvigorate the racial/social order of such regions as the Southern California region and such "global cities" like Los Angeles, California.

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[5] In *Prismatic Metropolis: Inequality in Los Angeles*, (2000) social scientists Lawrence D. Bobo, Oliver, Johnson, and Valenzuela concur with this assertion by concluding that urban inequality in Los Angeles, California is greatly influenced by racial inequality.

Instead, neoliberal white supremacy functions as a result of a particular shift in the racial/social order caused by an appeared end of prior racial/social arrangements and the introduction of neoliberal ideologies and globalization to the region during the 1970's and 1980's. Within this shift in the racial project of the United States and in this case, Los Angeles, the prior era of racial apartheid that came to an end during the 1960's, shifted towards a color-blind view on race. Racism and racial terror under this post-apartheid era are conceived as individual acts of discrimination and not systemic acts against a collective racial population. Often referred to as a shift towards a neoliberal multicultural society, neoliberal white supremacy is veiled in such a way that it no longer needs to depend on phenotypical differences to distinguish racial hierarchies. In an age of neoliberal multiculturalism, race and racism are naturalized in other forms of daily interaction. Such indicators as economic, political, cultural, and religious affiliation took the place of phenotypical differences, veiling the overt racism that still existed in housing practices, employment opportunities, and educational equity. Moreover, in this stage of post-apartheid neoliberal white supremacy, whites are naturalized as successful and rationale individuals while Blacks, Chicanos, and Latinos are seen as laborers, criminals, a burden on the state, and undocumented. How these perceived naturalized differences are used to consent the policing of and governing of communities of color like the barrios and ghettos of East Los Angeles and South Central Los Angeles is important for this dissertation.

Racialization of Space

The 20th century history of Los Angeles is based on the racist premise of exclusion and enclosure of black, brown, red, and yellow bodies into ethnic enclaves, barrios and ghettoes. These are marginal spatial areas that through precise forms of

control, surveillance, highly militarized policing, are out of the visual site of white communities in Los Angeles. Early 20th century urban planning in Los Angeles promoted the city as the last possible "oasis" for whites to live in. The industrial Midwestern and Northern cities had failed to contain white and non-white bodies from actively engaging in everyday public practices of labor and leisure. Los Angeles became the last refuge for whites to build a city in their image. The city of Los Angeles grew as the great project of white supremacy under the guise of separating whites from non-whites. Although scholars have recently written about the early pluri-ethnic communities and daily interaction that existed in the first half of the 20th century, the second half of the 20th century produced the clear separation of communities based on race and class.

For instance, the 1965 Watts rebellion is considered by many scholars a watershed period in Los Angeles in terms of shifting state control practices in the barrio and ghetto to more indirect approaches to disciplining and controlling non-white populations. Scholars writing during the turbulent 1960s previously saw the barrio and ghetto as an "internal colony", segregated from the rest of Los Angeles. Claiming political, social, economic, and educational disenfranchisement, "internal colony" scholars equated the urban barrio and ghetto to a form of colonization by a predominant "white establishment" against blacks, Chicanos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. (Blauner, 1972; Munoz, 1990; Barrera 1979) Influenced by the late 1950s and early 1960s anti-colonial and liberation movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, many of these militant scholars and activists studied the works of Frantz Fanon in Africa and Ernesto "Che" Guevara in Latin America to formulate a response to a long legacy of racial terror in communities of color in the US.

Using the internal colony model as a backdrop for more militant activism and acts of rebellion, Black, Chicano, Asian American, and Native American organizations

formed a greater sense of cultural nationalism that although narrow in some instances, also looked internationally to ground their struggle for a sense of barrio and ghetto empowerment. Cultural self-determination and a renewed sense of community empowerment were the beacons for the 1960's and 1970's identity based movements like the Chicano Power movement, the American Indian movement, and the Black Power movement.

Yet, the ideological shift towards looking at the experiences of both barrio and ghetto residents through the lens of colonization and internal colonialism, neglected the structural and societal changes and responses to the post-Watts and post-urban uprisings movement in the United States by communities of color. Facing an intense amount of white anxiety, based on the fear of a "real" anti-white backlash by Black Power, Chicano Power, and Red Power movements in the United States, the state implemented stronger disciplining techniques under the guise of "law and order" that criminalized mostly young black, brown, yellow, and red males. Although a constant police presence has always been a part of daily barrio and ghetto life in Los Angeles and in urban areas throughout the United States, the new "law and order" mandates no longer looked to solely enclose barrio and ghetto residents inside these "internal colonies" but also find ways of jailing them inside the booming prison industry. Structurally, the state's response to a growing white anxiety over the fear of losing their place within the racial hierarchy of the United States paralleled capital's response to the 1950s and 1960s anti-colonial and anti-imperial movements attack on capitalism. Before 1965, barrios and ghettoes were an unlimited source of cheap labor to fill the growing military, textile, rubber, and steel industries in Los Angeles. The expansion of markets on a global scale, decentralized production and manufacturing industries in urban cities like Los Angeles, Detroit, and Chicago, to cheaper and less regulated markets in other countries across the

world. The de-industrialization of these cities severely altered social relations in barrios and ghettoes throughout Los Angeles. Most scholars on Los Angeles agree that for a period of time spanning several decades, from the 1940s to the late 1960s, Black residents in places like Watts, South Central Los Angeles, and Compton, (where their population was substantial) held home ownership and union held jobs in these manufacturing industries that were dismantled. With the de-industrialization of labor in Los Angeles, a new form of labor extraction replaced the manufacturing industries causing mass unemployment in urban barrios and ghettoes in Los Angeles, California. This post-fordist form of production, filled by a growing foreign population of undocumented labor, is characteristic of a flexible form of production in low-skilled and low tech industries and a new source of labor in such industries as the service and entertainment industry. The new "transnational barrio," in this case, is a place of new racial and ethnic anxieties and tensions between traditional and established racialized ethnic groups like Chicanos and Blacks, and newly arrived populations like ethnic Mexicans, Central Americans, and Asians. On the other hand, these new "transnational barrios" are a source of new political subjectivities and cultural politics that are shifting the meaning of citizenship and questioning the spatial logic of neoliberal white supremacy in cities like Los Angeles, California. The following section will discuss this dissertations intervention in these new political subjectivities and struggles that are emerging in a global city like Los Angeles and the role Chicanas/os have in this process.

METHODOLOGIES AND THE POLITICS OF FIELDWORK:

From May 2005 to December 2006 I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork in Los Angeles, California. My research initially followed the everyday functions and politics of Estación Libre Los Angeles. The Los Angeles chapter of Estación Libre, a much

larger collective of Zapatista-inspired US “people of color” activists with chapters throughout the United States, started organizing as a core group of 10 men and women, mostly Chicanos and Latinos in 2004. The majority of the group had some prior experience with solidarity work in Chiapas and was involved in various social movements (environmental justice, gang prevention, Venezuela and Cuba solidarity, and immigrant rights) in Los Angeles. Unlike other autonomous groups in Los Angeles California, the Estación Libre Los Angeles collective does not have a physical space from which to operate from. Instead, the project that I proposed two years ago was to follow the daily activities of its members and to also include the broader national collective as part of the project. The intention of such an initial project was to chart the participation of Chicanos and Latinos within a transnational shift in US "people of color" politics through the political participation within Estación Libre, a "people of color" collective in the United States and Chiapas. My entry into such a project comes from my political participation within Estación Libre over the last eight years. In this period, I have facilitated various "people of color" delegations to Chiapas and organized various events in Austin, the Bay Area, and Los Angeles for the overall Estación Libre collective that numbers from 20 active regional representatives to 200 individuals throughout the United States. This initial project was proposed to the Estación Libre national collective and then discussed in April of 2005 during a national encuentro with the Estación Libre Los Angeles collective for specifics. At the time, two EL Los Angeles members were moving down south to Chiapas to work as the EL coordinators in Chiapas. In turn, their departure to Chiapas left their apartment free for the sub-leasing of one year. The apartment is nestled in the heart of El Sereno, a community just east of East Los Angeles and in what is considered the San Gabriel valley. El Sereno, like many enclaves and barrios in East Los Angeles holds a unique spatial position in Los Angeles. Communities

like El Sereno that are predominantly working class Mexicans and Latinos and that are also majority home owners are adjacent to some of the most affluent neighborhoods in California like South Pasadena and Pasadena. The location of the apartment also placed me in the middle of many of the autonomous spaces and collectives that worked out of northeast Los Angeles. For instance, the Eastside Cafe ECHOSPACE was approximately a half of a mile away and other spaces in the area like the indigenous charter school "Academia Semillas del Pueblo" were even closer.

Before my future roommates left to Chiapas, they introduced me to the people working out of the Eastside Cafe ECHOSPACE. Although it wasn't my intention to work directly with the Eastside Cafe, I visited often during my first couple of months in order to acclimate to the surroundings of East Los Angeles. Coming from and being raised in the East Bay Area, I was not accustomed to the apparent community divisions in terms of race, or at least in the inner city. The Westside of Berkeley growing up (and it's changed dramatically due to high levels of gentrification in the Bay Area in general) was predominantly Chicano, Mexican, and Black. Even after my family moved to Richmond, California in the early 1980's, the neighborhood was predominantly ethnic Mexican, Black, and poor working class Whites. I bring this point up in order to frame the surrounding environment for which much of my fieldwork in Los Angeles took place as a mono-ethnic community. As my fieldwork led me to such changing communities like South Central Los Angeles and Echo Park, there was a pluri-racial and ethnic population that interacted daily, albeit in competing ways. Yet, although I suggest that parts of South Central Los Angeles are more pluri-racial and ethnic than East Los Angeles, this does not mean that different racial and ethnic groups live harmoniously with each other, in this case, Blacks living alongside Mexicans and Latinos.

The Eastside Cafe is a space that promotes and seeks the assistance and participation from a broad pluri-racial and ethnic population. It is a small space in El Sereno, California, nestled between various local businesses and shops. From afar, you would not be able to read the purple painted sign outside of the Eastside Cafe ECHOSPACE. Local muralist Jose Ramirez painted some time ago the mural outside of the Eastside Cafe and never quite finished embossing the letters in bright enough colors for people driving by Huntington Drive to see the Eastside Cafe. The name, “Eastside Café”, suggest that it is an actual cafe. This is not the case. You will not find your regular mocha lattes at the Eastside Cafe; instead it is an empty space with various tables and fold out chairs, with a bathroom and a backdoor that leads to a messy trash area that is always occupied by scraps of carpet fabric and pieces of wood from the adjacent carpet and furniture store. The open space allowed for various events like art exhibits, poetry readings, punk and Ska band performances, English classes for people in the community, and political organizing around various issues. A symbol of the Eastside Cafe's respected place by many in the community was the fact that it was not "tagged" by local gangs or "crews". In urban areas where there is a high amount of perceived "vandalism" and graffiti writing, certain places and walls are sometimes not touched because of their place in the community. For instance, images of the Virgen de Guadalupe and murals that depict the struggle of Chicanos and Mexicans in Los Angeles are usually not tagged on.

The inviting nature of people who volunteered their time at the Eastside Cafe, had me coming back often to help with events and to plan even more activities out of this non-alcoholic, drug-free space. The coordinating committee of the Eastside Cafe met every two weeks on Sundays and I often frequented the meetings since they were open to the public. These meetings were amazing to just listen to because the coordinating committee worked on a consensus model and very much had a chemistry that one could

tell had formed after years of organizing together. My participation in these meetings gradually came to a more vocal position as I incorporated myself in the daily "work" of the Eastside Cafe. The Eastside became a "safe space" to talk about politics, experiences, and share stories and news that affected us all. On some level, my prior organizing in Chiapas and the US opened many spaces in Los Angeles. Many Chicanos and "people of color" from Los Angeles had participated in or known about Estación Libre delegations and many of its members also used and worked out of the Eastside Cafe. Eventually, I began to identity and was identified as not only as a member of Estación Libre but also as a coordinating committee member of the Eastside Cafe.

My personal reflections, which I see as an important part of any ethnographic work and also a key process for my political organizing, on my first couple of months in Los Angeles is that communities in Los Angeles were preparing for various political changes. For one, the recent mayoral elections manifested in various racial and ethnic divisions, that were glamorized by the media in various ways. For instance, during this electoral summer of 2005, news reports of Black and Brown gang shootings led every newspaper and news shows. At the statewide level, the rise of nativist and fascist groups like the "minutemen" brought the "border" back to Los Angeles and memories of the anti-immigrant bashing of the Prop. 187 era were rising once again. Bi-nationally, Mexico began a difficult process of deciding its next president. And internationally, various struggles across the Americas focused on resisting the penetration of greater neoliberal economic restructuring with even greater overtones of "anti-terrorist" additions to economic restructuring in the region.

My reflections either written down as field notes or journal entries became one method to think through various "organizing" questions and tensions that arose daily while I worked with Estación Libre, the Eastside Cafe, and later the Autonomous Peoples

Collective. Interviews, which hold a greater amount of data and that can retrieve specific answers to questions in one's research design, do not always seem viable in political spaces. Interviews seem too intrusive and formal. They are also perceived as closely tied to the politics of the university and deemed as providing "just another gaze" on people in the barrio. Interestingly enough, although there was a sense of anti-intellectualism in many organizing circles while I was in Los Angeles, it wasn't an all-encompassing feeling. Many organizers that worked out of the Eastside Cafe and the majority of members in Estación Libre were college graduates. The question of educational attainment and political organizing is a difficult one to frame in an introduction. I would add though, that educational attainment by many Chicana/o autonomous organizers allowed for them to work in non-profit areas and other social service and educational arenas that they would have not been able to work in without a college degree. This of course is the contradiction of the growing non-profit sector and the institutionalization of progressive movements.

In terms of "autonomous" Los Angeles, no other events changed the organizing of Zapatista-inspired Chicanos like: 1) the June of 2005 Zapatista communique, "the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle" and the formation of "La Otra Campaña" in Mexico, and 2) the struggle to save the 14-acre urban garden, the South central Farm, in Vernon, California. These two events are not mutually exclusive of each other and in various points converge politically. The call by the "Sixth Declaration" resonated greatly with many organizations and collectives throughout Los Angeles. For autonomous collectives like the Autonomous Peoples Collective network, "la Sexta" articulated a working social agenda that many had aspired to organize around. "La sexta" and other communiqués that followed, by the Zapatistas, became key blueprints to working locally, regionally, across the transfrontera region, and internationally. I cannot stress how important a

document the "Sixth Declaration" was, not only for political organizing in Los Angeles but also as a tool to (re)conceptualize the political commitments of many of us who were scholars and community organizers. "La sexta's" call for an anti-capitalist and anti-political party movement that was "to the left and from below" spoke directly towards many of us in academia who battled over how to balance our political commitments with the objective and scientific nature of anthropology. As a radical methodological tool, "La sexta" and other Zapatista communiqués are used in this dissertation as valuable archival and "living" documents that offer a critical analysis of "power" from "below".

Finally, the struggle to save the 14-acre urban garden in South Central Los Angeles discusses the "real" ramifications of working politically towards social change in a post-9/11 world. There has been a global shift by governments since the end of the anti-imperialist and freedom movements of the 1960's and 70's to enclose and fragment social movements and mobilization, especially in the United States. Strategies of non-violent protest and mobilization are confronted with disproportionate numbers of police forces that in many cases use excessive force on protesters. Surveillance and police infiltration that resonate with the highly organized COINTELPRO counter-insurgency techniques of murders, framings, and mass arrests in the 60's and 70's are now highly technological and state-funded by a post-9/11 discourse of "anti-terrorism" throughout the world. Los Angeles is no exception to this "police-state" and in fact has paved the way in urban "anti-terrorism" tactics in predominantly communities of color. Although Los Angeles California as a field site might not be comparable to doing research in a more volatile place like Iraq, Afghanistan, or Oaxaca, during my two years in Los Angeles and especially during my organizing to "save the farm", the tension that surrounded the farm were extremely volatile. One only has to look at the police takeover of the farm in June of 2006 and the destruction of the farm in July of 2006 to see how

volatile the situation really was. Working under these extreme conditions is a difficult process to partake in and an even harder process to write about. Emotions still take the best of me when discussing the farm. If there was any symbol more important to the possibility of "autonomy" in Los Angeles, it was the "the Farm" and the 300 mostly migrant families that produced their own food and grew their own crops in the middle of the "concrete jungle." These are questions and concerns that I hope future researchers can discuss and reflect upon before, during, and after their entry into the "field."

An Inverted Periscope Approach to the Politics of Fieldwork

> Dignity, a central category in the Zapatista uprising, is the rejection of disillusionment: the rejection, therefore, of that which underlies the current development of the social sciences. It should be clear, then, that to speak of Zapatismo and the social sciences' is not to constitute Zapatismo as an *object* of the social sciences, but to see Zapatismo rather as the *subject* of an attack on the mainstream development of the social sciences. To treat Zapatismo as an *object* of social scientific inquiry would be to do violence to the Zapatistas, to refuse to listen to them, to force them into categories that they are challenging, to impose upon them the disillusionment that they are rebelling against. In other words, the Zapatistas are not a 'they' but a 'we'. 'Detras del pasamontañas estamos ustedes" as Major Ana Maria said in her speech of welcome to the Intergalactic meeting of 1996. Or, to quote Antonio Garcia de Leon, 'as more and more rebel communiqués were issued, we realised that in reality the revolt came from the depths of ourselves. (Holloway, 2002)

> We can no longer write or speak from nowhere to abstract audiences. We can only address real men and women, with whom we share the same social and intellectual concerns. (Esteva and Prakash, 1998: 7)

I have been deeply involved in Zapatista solidarity work since 1996. Since 1998, I have been an active member of various Zapatista-inspired collectives and organizations in the US and in Mexico. And my dissertation fieldwork in Los Angeles, from May 2005 to December 2007 reflects my political work organizing with self-identified Zapatista-inspired autonomous collectives, networks, and spaces throughout Los Angeles, California, the United States, and Mexico. This experience also reflects my own personal

politics as a radical scholar of color and the political commitments that develop from working face-to-face or across other geographies with other radical activists, organizers, artists, scholars that share similar dreams and visions for social justice.

This personal standpoint does not come without contradictions. Indeed, what social justice worker or person with radical politics does not include reflection or contradiction as part of their tool bag towards personal and collective transformation? Instead, when I refer to my own situated place or standpoint as a contradiction I am speaking to the limitations of anthropology and the borders of objectivity and distance that disallows for the discipline to be more than a facilitator of imperial and colonial designs. These contradictions include the degree of participation with the "subjects" I investigate in my study, whether the study follows strict empirical guidelines for conducting research and recovering data, or what the politics of my own participation might have on the outcome of a detached investigation or study.

I work within these parameters in the field of anthropology and attempt to disrupt its relationship with modern-colonial and post-modern-colonial projects by demanding that the field of anthropology de-colonize the modern notion of the "I" or the individual. Within this relationship, the investigator, the "I", only sees himself/herself as the sole producer of knowledge. Only through an objective and detached individual eye can this knowledge be rational and sound, thus recreating colonial relationships between the researcher and the "object" investigated. A decolonial approach to anthropology ruptures this dialectic at the basic level of transforming the investigator's gaze.

If instead of furthering the modern-colonial project of the "I" or the individual, and replace it with the collective "we", the anthropologist is forced to change the lens in which he/she conducts research. This is an essential component of an "other" anthropology that uses the collective "we" in the creation of a "collective subject."

This dissertation is an attempt and exercise at developing the "collective subject". It assumes that through constant dialogical encounter and reflection between the researcher and those being researched one may ascertain deeper and more nuanced understanding of a particular aspect of a community's or social groups life cycle. I will return to the question of fieldwork and activism in the final reflection of this dissertation.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS:

The following is an outline of the dissertation:

Chapter 1, "Racialized Ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles, California," is an introductory history chapter that describes the racialization process undergone by ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles, from the late 19th century till the 1990's. The chapter focuses on the lives of racialized ethnic Mexicans through the intersecting lens of race and class. By discussing the long historical process of building Los Angeles into the United States "last pure white American city" and later into a "Latino Metropolis," I contend that the predominant logic that shapes the city's social order is based on the social and economic success of whites Angelinos at the expense of those racialized as non-whites. Racialized ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles have played a significant role in resisting and at times conforming to this racial/social logic that governs Los Angeles, California. The chapter is intended to flesh out the different responses by racialized ethnic Mexicans as they impact and help shape the political, social, and economic contours of the region.

Chapter 2, "Loneliness and Despair: Life in the Global City," continues where Chapter 1 left off. It investigates the emergence of Los Angeles, California as the next great "global city" the likes of New York, London, and Tokyo. This includes shifts in the political, economy, and demographic makeup of the city during the late 1960's up until the early 1990's. These shifts are symbolic of continuous political and economic "crises"

in urban cities throughout the United States that have affected such racialized groups as Chicanos, Mexicanos, and Latinos in Los Angeles. The second half of the chapter is a set of ethnographic vignettes and recollections by Chicana/o activists of the period just before the Zapatista uprising of January 1st, 1994. The chapter uses these ethnographic examples and oral histories as a point of reference as to why Chicana/o youth, in particular, found political and cultural resonance with the Zapatista indigenous communities of Chiapas, Mexico. These examples include the effects of racism and police brutality on the lives of Chicanos in East Los Angeles, the identity formation of Chicanos within the educational system, and the relationship between the emergent "global city" and an increasingly marginalized population of Latino immigrants arriving to Los Angeles, California to work in the post-fordist economy.

Chapter 3, "Chicana/o Solidarity and the Zapatistas," is a brief overview of the Zapatista indigenous uprising in 1994 and the immense amount of solidarity received for the Zapatista cause after its initial appearance. The chapter focuses on Chicana/o solidarity with the Zapatistas and in particular, the numerous peace and cultural delegations organized between the Zapatista communities in Chiapas and Chicana/o artists, activists, and community organizers in the United States. Such instances of political and cultural solidarity are considered by many Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activists as the formative stages for recent autonomous organizing in such urban areas like Los Angeles, California.

Chapter 4, "Chicana/o Urban Zapatismo," enters our discussion on the political and cultural resonance inspired by the Zapatista indigenous movement of Chiapas, Mexico. I briefly describe the Zapatista struggle, its resonance on an emerging alterglobalization movement, and its critique of traditional forms of political solidarity. I then move to Zapatismo's resonance to urban areas. Here, I use, John Holloway's

concept of "urban Zapatismo," to describe the political resonance of Zapatismo in the urban city. I argue that the concept can have a useful application towards understanding the narratives of Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activists, artists, musicians, and community organizers, that in the early 1990's found political and cultural echoes in the January 1st, 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico. I modify John Holloway's concept to fit the Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o experience in Los Angeles, by offering the similar concept of "Chicana/o urban Zapatismo" as a working analytical tool towards understanding not only the political resonance of Zapatismo on Chicanas/os, Latinas/os, and other ethnic Mexican urban communities but also more importantly its cultural resonance. I argue that "Chicana/o urban Zapatismo," or the coupling of Zapatismo's political and cultural resonance on urban Chicanas/os, produces a new form of cultural politics that is transnational but rooted in a localized cultural aesthetic that is articulated through a blossoming Chicana/o arts and music scene in Los Angeles.

Chapter 5, "The Eastside Café ECHOSPACE," describes the work of the Eastside Café Echospace in El Sereno, California. From May 2005 to December 2006, I worked with the self-identified autonomous space, the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE on political and cultural projects directed at producing alternative social relations that go contrary to a list of corporate market-driven social relations that Eastside Café members have identified as affecting the lives of community members in El Sereno and throughout the greater eastside of Los Angeles. The chapter describes the history of the Eastside Café and its daily operations. It also discusses through several ethnographic vignettes the relationship between the Eastside Café and the non-profit industrial complex, and the state. In response, the chapter ends with a discussion on how the Eastside Café uses an interweaving of the political and the cultural to create long-lasting relationships with the El Sereno community.

Chapter 6, "The South Central Farm," focuses on the topics of violence, spatial governance, and the production of de-colonial spatial practices by new Latino "transnational communities," in contested urban landscapes like South Central Los Angeles. Through the example of the South Central Farm, a 14-acre urban farm in Vernon, California, the chapter explores the relationship between capitalist enclosures on urban landscapes and the technologies of violence used to police and govern these landscapes according to neoliberal strategies and mandates. In contrast, the chapter offers a unique response to these market-driven and racial enclosures through the construction of an urban farm in the middle of an industrial zone by racialized ethnic Mexicans and Latinos who use traditional farming techniques to produce a sense of place and community in an area of Los Angeles popularly known for its street violence.

Finally, Chapter 7, "La Otra en el Otro Lado (the Other and the Other Side)," travels past the elusive borders of the greater Los Angeles area and southward towards the US///Mexico borderlands. It narrates the Zapatistas most recent political proposition in the "Mexican Other Campaign." From the summer of 2005 till December 2006, the first phase of the Mexican Other Campaign focused on organizing a broad based movement made up of Leftist individuals, organizations, and collectives from throughout Mexico. Chicana/o urban Zapatistas working in Los Angeles, California on the Mexican Other Campaign shifted the politics of the Other Campaign by asking, if the Mexican Other Campaign claims to organize a broad based movement of Mexican groups "to the left and from below" then how could it do so without included the voices and experiences of over one-third of the Mexican population that lives outside of Mexico? The chapter ends with an analysis of the events that transpired during the Mexican Other Campaign's visit to the border city of Tijuana, Baja California and its meeting with Chicanos and other groups from the United States on October 19th, 2006. The chapter argues that such

trans-border encounters and sharing of experiences between Mexicans and Chicanos can lead to a reshaping of political, social, and cultural geographies that could possibly disrupt the contentious and violent history of the 1950-mile long US/Mexico border.

I end the dissertation with a final set of "reflections" on my time working with the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE, the Autonomous Peoples Collective, and the Mexican Other Campaign. It charts a series of questions and concerns that emerged out of the everyday political and cultural organizing produced by Chicana/o urban Zapatistas over the course of my two years living in Los Angeles and over the last twelve years of working on Zapatista-inspired activism and cultural production, from 1994 to 2006.

TRANSLATIONS, USE OF TERMS, AND PSEUDONYMS

Throughout this dissertation I have used several Spanish references and citations that I quote without translation. These include communiqués, books, journal articles, formal interviews, and quotes taken verbatim during my ethnographic fieldwork. In most cases I have translated the Spanish into English and placed them as footnotes at the bottom of the page. In some instances, I paraphrase several quotes or references after the passage is used. I take full responsibility for any inaccuracies in the translation process.

Conducting research on a diverse ethnic group as ethnic Mexicans and Latinos in Los Angeles offers a series of issues concerning the many local uses of code switching and language mixing. In this case, the use of what is called Chicano Spanish, commonly referred to as Calo or Spanglish, is prevalent throughout the dissertation. Most interviews conducted and ethnographic vignettes are in Chicano Spanish, which uses interchangeable the English language with the Spanish language. In these cases, I have made the decision to not translate the Spanish portions in order to not alter the flow and meaning of the quote or conversation. After hours of transcribing dozens of interviews, I

have left much of these mannerisms in speech and language in place in order to keep the words of my informants unfiltered and complete.

Secondly, I would like to clear up any confusion on the use of terms to identify a racial/ethnic/gendered group, community, population, or community discussed throughout the dissertation. In terms of the diverse ethnic Mexican population of Los Angeles, I make clear distinctions throughout the dissertation between ethnic Mexican groups, their citizenship status, their regional location, and their class status. In terms of ethnic differences, I use the term "Chicana/o" to identify US born ethnic Mexican women and men and Mexican or Mexicana/o to identify Mexican-born women and men who live either in the United States or in Mexico. The use of Latina/o is used throughout the dissertation in reference to Central and South American women and men who are either born in the United States or in Latin America. I also use the umbrella term "people of color" several times in the dissertation. The term "people of color" is used to identify non-white racialized minorities in the United States which include Chicanas/os, Latinas/os, African Americans, Asian Americans, and First Nation Native Americans.

Finally, I use pseudonyms for all of my informants and interviewees unless they are public figures who I have cited or referenced outside of the formal interview process or throughout the daily collection of ethnographic data. In these cases, I make sure to identify these public figures from informants that I have created pseudonyms for.

CHAPTER 1

Racialized Ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles, California

Chapter 1 discusses contemporary forms of Chicana/o autonomous organizing in Los Angeles by tracing the overlapping historical narratives that put into perspective the

ambivalent and interstitial position that Chicanas/os, ethnic Mexicans, and Latinas/os occupy in the construction and formation of their political and cultural identities as a racialized ethnic group in Los Angeles.[6] This chapter analyzes the long historical process of making Los Angeles the "last pure American city" and later a "Latino Metropolis." I contend that the predominant logic that shapes the city's social order is based on the social and economic success of whites Angelinos at the expense of those racialized as non-whites. This is often measured by the privileges and access to resources that whites generally enjoy over other groups. It is necessary to trace the history of racialized ethnic Mexicans living in Los Angeles, California throughout the 20th century in order to capture the diverse strategies this racialized ethnic group developed to navigate, maneuver, and contest the prevailing social order of the region.

The sections that follow provide an introductory history lesson on ethnic Mexican Los Angeles in the 20th century. Through a recollection of the early 20th century up until the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellions, focusing on the lives and struggles of ethnic Mexicans, I aim to show how the creation of Los Angeles as a major industrial and cultural center in the Western United States is based on the erasure and marginalization of non-Whites from the physical and cultural landscapes of the greater Los Angeles area. Within these historical narratives of resistance, struggle, and at times, conformity, ethnic Mexicans in their many complexities have proven formidable adversaries to these racial and economic logics of exploitation and erasure and at other times, colluded in their own particular erasure and the exploitation of other racialized groups. I conclude with an analysis of the

[6] I use the term "racialized ethnicity" to underline how the traditional use of ethnicity to mark cultural identity, especially in the context of Mexico and Latin America, is also racialized depending on the particular power relation an ethnic group holds in a given social and racial hierarchy, like those in the United States (Grosfoguel, 2004).

city's transformation during the early 1990's, into a "Latino Metropolis" and a "global city" within the modern capitalist world system.

THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY ORIGINS OF A WHITE SOCIAL ORDER IN LOS ANGELES:

This section traces the historical underpinnings of racialization and economic exploitation of racialized ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles, California. Instead of linearly categorizing the history of Chicanas/os to monolithic periods of transition or ideological homogeneity, this section supports the approach used by Emma Perez, in her influential work, *Decolonial Imaginary* (1999), by interrogating genealogical continuities within the long movement script of Mexicans in Los Angeles and the United States. It is the goal of this section to discuss how race and racism have been deployed by the white ruling class against the racialized ethnic Mexican community of Los Angeles and the, often contradictory, ways in which racialized ethnic Mexicans maneuvered and combated such forms of racism.

Chicana/o historians point to the early twentieth century as one of the most ideologically important periods for the construction of a Chicana/o or Mexican American identity (Perez, 1999; Gomez-Quiñonez, 1971; Sanchez, 1993). The periods within 1900-1920 saw a dramatic increase in migration and political activity by Mexicans from Mexico and ethnic Mexicans in the United States. Prior to this era, Mexicans made up a small percentage of people within cities like Los Angeles. For example, George Sanchez argues that Mexicans in Los Angeles during the 1900s were outnumbered at least ten to one by Anglo-Americans and European immigrants (Sanchez, 1993).

Contemporary scholars of this era trace the increase of Mexicans during the early twentieth century to reasons other than the commonly agreed upon push/pull factors associated with the political and economic turmoil of the early years prior to the Mexican

Revolution in Mexico, from 1910 to 1917 (Sanchez, 1993; Gonzalez and Fernandez, 2002). Instead, Gonzalez and Fernandez suggest that the American influenced modernization of Mexico during the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship from 1876 to 1910 facilitated the development of American political, military, and economic imperialism throughout Mexico and Latin America. Gonzalez and Fernandez state,

> The United States initiated new mechanisms of empire in the late 1870s when it became the senior partner in an alliance with the local Mexican elite personified in the figure of dictator Porfirio Diaz. Using threats of military intervention, U.S. capital interests invested heavily in the construction of railroads in Mexico. These initial intrusions were quickly followed by massive investments in mining, cattle farming, and cotton production (Gonzalez and Fernandez, 2002: 21).

The economic exploitation of Mexico became the experimental battleground for future interventions throughout Latin America and the world. The opportunity to conquer Mexico after the end of the 1845-1848 Mexican American War became highly debated by the United States government. Gonzalez and Fernandez suggest that economic conquest, although not the same as land conquest, represented the Anglo imperial design for much of the continent. Rather than have millions of racialized ethnic Mexican mestizos and Indians as colonial subjects, the U.S. instead supported the Mexican European white power elite politically, economically, and militarily, thus creating a neo-colonial relationship with Mexico.

Ironically, it was the economic support the U.S. offered to Diaz that helped spur the Mexican Revolution in the Northern states of Mexico and that facilitated the eventual migration of thousands of Mexicans once the Mexican Revolution started. In his study on the construction of a Mexican American identity in Los Angeles from 1900-1945, George Sanchez (1993) states that the modernization and expansion of the railroad system in Mexico and the United States became the route used by thousands of Mexicans, both as exiles and refugees, entering the United States. Although the railroad system was

designed specifically to administer and transfer foreign economic interests from the interior of Mexico to the ports and borders of the country, they were also a way to bring in American and European goods and technologies that the Mexican power elite saw as a way to modernize and in effect, Americanize, the perceived backward rural mestizo and Indian. In this case, the 1900s and the 1910s were characterized by important role that the railroads played in moving thousands of rebels and government soldiers and their supplies, and more importantly, for the first time they were used to provide travel to thousands of displaced Mexican men and women from the interior of Mexico.

Many of these individuals and families settled in urban areas like Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Chicago. It is important to note, though, that the number of migrants arriving from Mexico to Los Angeles, for instance, was comparatively small to those that arrived to places along the southeastern part of the 2000-mile long U.S./Mexico border. Migration figures show that only 7 percent of all Mexicans that crossed from Mexico into the U.S. actually arrived via the Mexico/California border. Many of these displaced Mexicans, who were predominately male, arrived to Los Angeles after migrating from different places throughout the Southwest and California (Sanchez, 1993). This is important in terms of discussing the racial discrimination faced by Mexicans migrants in the United States. Since many crossed in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona their interactions with a distinct Anglo hegemony and a well-established Mexican American population in different regions throughout the Southwest, greatly affected their perceptions of race, racism, and power within the system of racial apartheid in the United States.

Those that eventually arrived in the growing cities of the West found work as fruit and vegetable pickers in the valleys in and around L.A., and in the growing number of factories that lined the peripheries of downtown Los Angeles. Unfortunately, they traded

one form of exploitation and persecution in Mexico for another in the United States. Facing a huge influx of rural Mexican refugees due to the turmoil of the Mexican Revolution, many cities like Los Angeles feared the increase of a non-White population that could possibly destabilize the deeply rooted White hegemonic order of Los Angeles and Southern California. This displaced dark-skinned mestizo and indigenous rural Mexican population differed from other waves of Mexican refugees that were lighter skinned, skilled, and educated in Mexico.

Comparatively, the small Mexican American population, which was well established and segregated to small enclaves throughout Los Angeles since the American annexation of the Southwest after the Mexican American War in 1848, was perceived as docile and controllable. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, between the United States and Mexico, handed over two-thirds of Mexico's territory to the United States and provided citizenship to the Mexican population that decided to stay on their newly conquered lands, guaranteeing them the same rights as (Anglo) American citizens. It also provided protection of their lands and other natural resources, and more importantly, it protected cultural differences in language, religion, and tradition. Unfortunately, these provisions were not enforced and instead, Mexicans were relegated to second-class racialized citizens. Moreover, this population struggled to negotiate between their Mexican and *Californio* identity and their newly imposed American nationality. A considerable number of Mexicans in California, like their neighbors in other states throughout the Southwest, made judicial claims for land ownership and other rights, on the grounds of their European ancestry. These examples of racial ambiguity within post-1848 California would separate forming Mexican communities on the same grounds of racial purity. Since Mexican immigration during the late 19th and early 20th century was marginal at best, this population was Americanized in Anglo values but also kept their

Alta California and Mexican identity through a consistent but small Mexican presence that continued to seasonally migrate to Los Angeles from Mexico or other areas throughout the Southwest.

Tomas Almaguer (1994) argues that the perception of a passive negotiation by Mexicans on the grounds of their ambiguous racial heritage in California erases the mass legal extermination and genocide of Native Americans, and the spatial, political, and economic displacement of Mexicans throughout the state. For Almaguer, the racial ambiguity of conquered Mexicans in California did not stop or interrupt the expansion of White supremacy throughout the New West. At the turn of the 19th century, the state and federal government, joined with the pro-Diaz government to bi-nationally squash dissent on both sides of the US/Mexico border. They feared a distinctly different population of Mexicans, who brought the experiences and memories of revolution, rebellion, and state violence, and could possibly arose the "docile" Mexican population to rebel and intermix with the equally growing labor movement in the United States. These fears would eventually prove to be well-founded to varying degrees in Los Angeles.

The first two decades of the 20th century in Los Angeles saw tremendous growth in terms of both population size and spatial expansion. From 1900-1906, the population increased from 100,000 to 250,000 people. By 1930, the population had increased to well over one million people, making Los Angeles the fifth largest and fastest growing metropolitan area in the United States. Ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles, similarly, saw their numbers increase between 1900 and 1930. Although the post-1848 Mexican population was constituted by the seasonal migration of Mexican laborers from throughout the Southwest and a small native Californian Mexican population, by 1910, the Mexican immigrant population made up the majority of ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles and the majority of the non-Anglo racialized ethnic groups. By 1930, the ratio

of Mexican-born Mexicans and American-born Mexicans grew to 5 to 1. Sanchez (1993) argues that the former *Californio* middle-class and elite that lived in Los Angeles actually dispersed over time to other more remote areas of California, leaving only a small population of native *Californios* in Los Angeles that did not mix with the mostly immigrant Mexican community.

Yet that did not stop the mostly Anglo dominant class from using the image of the "*Californio*" to build Los Angeles as a progressive city with an old stoic *Californio* and Spanish Mission past and culture that could eventually be used to attract tourism to Los Angeles and California. As Sanchez writes,

> To compound the demographic change and geographic isolation, Anglos distorted the Spanish and Mexican past of Los Angeles by developing a romanticized version of local history and the idea that nineteenth-century Mexican/Spanish California was a lost civilization. Beginning in the 1880s, Los Angeles promoters cultivated an image of southern California as a simple, pastoral society. The "mission myth" as it has been called, was intended to attract tourists and settlers (1993:71).

He further adds,

> In addition, it (the focus on a Spanish past) totally glossed over the Mexican heritage and influence in the region, and the clash of cultures between Mexicans and Americans in the state. By depicting the city's Latino heritage as a quaint, but altogether disappearing element in Los Angeles culture, city officials inflicted a particular kind of obscurity onto Mexican descendants of that era by appropriating and then commercializing their history (ibid).

This process of erasing and placing Mexicans in an obscure position also occurred in other parts of the country. Richard Flores' (2002) study on the creation of the Alamo mission in San Antonio, Texas, as a state and national monument, paralleled the shifting power relations between the Mexican population of San Antonio and the rising Anglo hegemony in Texas. Inevitably, in Los Angeles, the effects of erasing the presence of

Mexicans and Mexican culture while promoting the city's idealized Spanish past had mixed results.

Anglo city planners could not make the growing Mexican population disappear. The agricultural suburbs of Los Angeles and the growing industries near downtown provided ample work for a Mexican labor force that, during the first two decades of the 20th century, had a diverse number of labor options. These options included field labor in the citrus groves of Southern California, landscaping the lavish homes of the wealthy in the Westside of Los Angeles, housecleaning, and assembly line sweatshop work in factories of the Eastside and Downtown areas. This provided a constant economic pipeline for further Mexican migration into Los Angeles. As a result, city planners and business interests built residential neighborhoods in Los Angeles strategically to be able to use the vast amount of cheap labor available to them from Mexican immigrants, Blacks, and European immigrants. The Eastside of Los Angeles, with its many factories, attracted a steady flow of Mexican labor causing its racially diverse population to rapidly become one of California's largest Mexican barrios.

This form of strategic segregation continuously displaced the formation of any significant ethnic Mexican community or enclave in Los Angeles. As Sanchez points out,

> Mexicans could hardly settle down permanently in a community when control of their neighborhoods was firmly entrenched in the hands of Anglo American industrial and commercial interests. The residential preferences of immigrants were always tempered by the zoning practices and labor needs of the city's establishment (Sanchez, 1993).

The combination of racial segregation, spatial development and expansion for economic interests, and the intentional class clustering of a large and exploitable

multiracial labor force dislodged any sense of community by racialized non-white groups in Los Angeles.

Mexican families hoping to buy property and become homeowners faced racist residential covenants throughout the city and higher than normal rates for property. The unstable nature of spatial development in Los Angeles made it virtually impossible for many Mexican families to buy a home. Those who were able to purchase a home suffered the city's fickle real estate development when residential areas with Mexican homeowners were rezoned into commercial, industrial areas. Because of the volatile circumstances that many racialized groups in Los Angeles faced, the Anglo social order in the city could manipulate the lives of ethnic Mexicans, Blacks, Asians, and white ethnic immigrants like chess pieces. Residential containment, in this case, proved useful for maintaining the racial and class disparities of the city. The Westside of Los Angeles became the safe haven of Anglo residents and future settlers, while the downtown and eastern part of the city became the racially and ethnically diverse areas of Los Angeles.

The construction of a consolidated White social order in Los Angeles relied on a number of different political different strategies to contain the Mexican population. On one hand, a strong nativist movement by Anglos during the first two decades of the 20th century, criminalized and demonized ethnic Mexicans as a growing plague on the image of Los Angeles as the last pure American city in the United States. The bloody WWI period produced a sense of "American patriotism," with strong "anti-outsider" sentiments. Even the labor unions of the era, like the American Federation of Labor and its leader Samuel Gompers, saw the growing Mexican population as a threat to living wages and equitable labor conditions for their mostly Anglo workforce. On the other hand, progressive Anglos in Los Angeles initiated several Americanization programs for both Mexican men and women. Unlike the strong nativist sentiments that characterized

the early 20th century, these Americanization programs were an example of the internal migration of the Anglo population. Most Anglos in Los Angeles were in fact not native to California. Sanchez predicts that only less than 15 percent of all Anglos were born in California during the early 20th century. Instead, many migrated to Los Angeles due to the massive propaganda of Los Angeles as a safe haven from the crime ridden and immigrant filled Midwestern and Eastern cities of the United States. This attracted two primarily different groups of Anglos. From the Midwest, Anglo middle-class Protestants arrived to Los Angeles wanting to build a city that had "law and order" and was religiously righteous. From the Southern states and the East Coast came a diverse group of Anglos that seeking refuge from the growth of racialized immigrants and Blacks in their cities and rural areas. While the Southern Anglos promoted racial segregation of their communities, Midwestern migrants saw the Mexican population as assimilable to American ways of life.

The Americanization programs that targeted ethnic Mexican community must be contrasted with the racist treatment of Blacks and Asians in Los Angeles. The Anglo elite perceived Mexicans as easier to assimilate than Blacks and Asians. Asians, in particular, faced extreme immigration restriction acts and exclusion laws that stopped their progressive growth within Los Angeles and throughout the country. Furthermore, although Mexicans did not enjoy the same social status as European immigrants, who, by the 1940s, had assimilated into the broader Anglo social order as "whites," they were in a more privileged position than other racialized groups, albeit in an ambivalent way.

In terms of the nativist movement in Los Angeles, the Mexican Revolution in the 1910s added extra fuel to these anti-Mexican sentiments. Furthered by the popular media, such as the *Los Angeles Times*, images of a growing Mexican horde of poor, diseased-ridden immigrants contributed to long-held sentiments that Mexicans in Los

Angeles were plotting similar rebellions and revolutions throughout the region. For instance, during the late 1900s and into the 1910s, Los Angeles was the home of some of Mexico's most famous revolutionaries in the Flores Magón brothers. As part of the revolutionary syndico-anarchist organization, the *Partido Liberal Mexicano*, Ricardo Flores Magón and Enrique Flores Magón organized several raids and rebellions on U.S. and Mexican elite interests in Northern Mexico. The PLM, which had a uniquely diverse base of Mexican origin membership with first and second generation Mexican Americans within their ranks, used print media to further their ideology of a workers' revolution "without borders." Mexican women also played a vital role within the PLM. They wrote articles on the role of women within the revolution in their newspaper, *Regeneración*, and were as militant as their male counterparts. Although, many of the views expressed by PLM members were radical for the time in terms of gender relations, they were nevertheless still male-focused, with women often written about as serving one sole purpose, to support the men in *their* cause.

The case of Ricardo Flores Magón and the PLM reveals the racial discourse that emerged around Mexican immigration to Los Angeles. Their time organizing in Los Angeles historically has not been understood within the larger context of the drastic changes occurring in the city and the region. For one, their radicalism posed a tremendous threat not only to the southern California social order, but also to the neo-colonial order between the United States and Mexico. While investigating dozens of articles written on the Flores Magón brothers and the PLM, the *Los Angeles Times*, regularly reported on the exploits of the PLM.

From 1907-1923, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote dozens of articles on the actions of the *Partido Liberal Mexicano*, and their charismatic leader, Ricardo Flores Magón. This was, as Emma Perez argues, not a coincidence. The *Los Angeles Times* owner, Harrison

Gray Otis, frequently used the PLM and Flores Magón as the poster children for the construction of a growing mass anti-Mexican hysteria. Gray Otis' political and economic interests in Mexico greatly influenced his decision to pinpoint the PLM and Flores Magón as the group of "Anarchists" responsible for the Mexican Revolution in the northern states of Mexico. In this regard, Perez states, "the city was clearly unwilling to welcome the party (PLM) when the overall sentiment was that Los Angeles already harbored undesirable socialists, anarchists, and militant laborers" (Perez, 1999:61).

In an article published on August 24, 1907, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on how the massive bi-national group of law enforcement agencies finally caught up to Ricardo Flores Magón in a boarded up house on Pico Street in East Los Angeles. The reporter states,

> Tracked from one end of the Western Hemisphere to the other, with the fate and welfare of a nation hanging on their capture, Ricardo Flores Magón, Antonio Villareal, and Librado Rivera, the leaders of a Mexican revolutionary plot, were captured in Los Angeles yesterday afternoon after a desperate hand to hand fight with the officers.

What is significant about this article, written three years before historians actually place the beginning of the Mexican Revolution, is that it is very detailed on the actions and events that led to the arrest of Flores Magón and others. Charged with breaking the "neutrality law" which was actually passed in order for U.S. companies to secure their economic interests in Mexico by pursuing and arresting possible revolutionaries indiscriminately, Flores Magón was arrested and paraded through the streets of downtown Los Angeles in order to show the mostly Mexican community that lived near the area, that such acts of treason and sedition would be harshly punished. The article subtitled, "Reds caught red handed" furthers,

> Yesterday came the end, like a bolt from a clear sky. Thomas Furlong, manager of the Furlong Secret Service Bureau of St. Louis with two deputies and Detectives Talamantes and Rico of the local department, swept down on the hotbed of the revolutionists at No. 111 East Pico Street and after a desperate struggle captured the men and lodged them in the city jail.

More than just a description of his capture, it is *who* captured him that I want to highlight. Sanchez writes that Los Angeles during the 1900s and 1910s actually did not have a significant Mexican population. Many Mexicans who migrated to Los Angeles lived in extremely segregated communities in and around the downtown area. Those that lived in Los Angeles were divided along lines of class and citizenship status. I bring these points up because it was two Mexican American detectives that apprehended Flores Magón, Villareal, and Rivera. The ambiguous position of a small Mexican American community and its relationship to the growing Mexican immigrant community placed them as insiders/outsiders within the White social order of Los Angeles. Knowing the Mexican parts of Los Angeles, the two Mexican American detectives were actually spies that attended regular PLM meetings in East Los Angeles. They collected information on Ricardo Flores Magón and his brother Enrique and reported that the PLM, or *junta*, as they were often called in the local newspapers, were planning acts of violence across the border in Mexico and that they frequently discussed organizing workers in Los Angeles. Talamantes and Rico would later be the informants that the federal government and hired bounty hunters would need to find Flores Magón and others.

A follow up article on the arrests the next day gives greater insight to Magón's place in Mexican Los Angeles. The article begins,

> Ricardo Flores Magón, president of the Mexican revolutionary society and his companions, Antonio Villareal, Librado Rivera, and Modesto Diaz, who were captured in Los Angeles Friday night, will be turned over to the custody of Federal officers today and will be transferred to the County Jail. Yesterday a swarm of Mexican patriots besieged the city jail, begging to be allowed either to

> speak with the prisoners or to be allowed to do something for them (*Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 25, 1907).

The article further adds,

> Many prominent men and women of the local Mexican colony speak highly of Magón and his assistants. Magón is styled as a patriot of the highest class, a man of brain and heart, whose chief desire was to see Mexico made a country for the Mexicans (*Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 25, 1907).

Two divided perspectives characterize the ethnic Mexican community in Los Angeles at this time. On one hand, the small Mexican American community that lived in Los Angeles held Flores Magón in contempt for breaking U.S. and Mexican laws. On the other hand, the growing Mexican immigrant population supported Magón and saw him as a "patriot." This is indicative of several competing discourses on national and ethnic allegiance between ethnic Mexicans in the United States, that were at play during the early part of the 20th century. The PLM, which they are never called in any of the articles written on them by the *Los Angeles Times*, was influential in building a broad base of support that crossed racial/ethnic lines in Los Angeles. After Flores Magón's arrest, many white anarchists and other Leftist groups came together to protest and demand that Flores Magón and his companions be released. This made them even more dangerous in the eyes of both the Mexican and U.S. governments.

The start of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 would once again change how Flores Magón would be seen by the state and the predominantly White hegemonic order in Los Angeles. Mass internal migration of white mid-westerners to Los Angeles, were also responsible for the shifting sentiments on the growing Mexican presence. Wanting to be separated from the downtown areas that were predominantly Mexican and Black, these new immigrants, along with an influx in European immigrants, changed the racial landscape of Los Angeles, and made it extremely dangerous for the PLM to operate its newspaper, *Regeneración*, and to organize on both sides of the border. Several articles

written during the Mexican Revolution by the *Los Angeles Times* consistently reflect back on the 1907 arrest as a marker of greater things to come if Mexicans in Los Angeles were not kept under strict scrutiny. The August 25, 1907 article gives us a glimpse of the rhetoric that informed popular understandings of the growing migration of Mexicans to Los Angeles and the Southwest.

> Ambassador Enrique Creel who arrived in Los Angeles yesterday, stated that he knew little of the situation. He explained that the neutrality complaints had been filed by Col. Green in St. Louis and that he did not know that the men were wanted in Mexico…The Ambassador did not explain however, how it was that the Immigration Bureau became so excited over sending back Villareal when there were scores of Mexican criminals admitted to the United States every day; how Villareal, a political refugee was picked out for deportation among hundreds of worse criminals and more unwelcome visitors."

As the article argues, "There were scores of Mexican criminals admitted to the United States every day," which reflected the prevailing discourse of Mexican immigrants as always already illegal and criminal. This statement along with others written during the 1910s exemplifies the growing concern by Whites of Mexicans crossing the U.S./Mexico border. These early discourses on the border as a source of criminality and subversive activity would have a greater impact on Mexican immigration for decades to come.

Often missed by scholars writing on the PLM and Flores Magón, are the ways in which women within the PLM also criminalized and highly sexualized by the media. In an article written two weeks after the arrests of Flores Magón, Villareal, Rivera, and Diaz, Maria Talavares, Magón's wife, is depicted as a ruthless "assassin" that along with Flores Magón was plotting to assassinate the Mexican and United States Presidents.

Almost fifteen years after his arrest in Los Angeles, Ricardo Flores Magón's death while imprisoned in Levenworth Federal Prison, was portrayed by the Los Angeles

Times as the end of a turbulent period in Mexico. The newly formed Mexican revolutionary state welcomed the PLM and offered to pay for Magón's body to be transferred to Mexico at their expense. His wife and others objected and instead refused to take any money from the government. The headline of a 1923 article by the *Los Angeles Times* states, "Anarchist Even in Death: Body of Ricardo Flores Magón Leaves Today for Last Journey to Mexico City" (*Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 6, 1923).

THE WHITEWASHING OF "LA AMERICA TROPICAL"

In his August 2, 2006 address to the diverse audience anticipating the unveiling of the controversial and recently renovated mural of famous Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros, "La America Tropical," in downtown Los Angeles, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa stated,

> The people of the city of Los Angeles will finally be able to view this cultural treasure long obscured from sight. The mural, while controversial in its time, will allow adults and children of all ages to learn about and appreciate the diverse history of this city, the importance of freedom of artistic expression and the origins of the muralist movement in this city. (www.getty.edu/news/press/center/siqueiros_announcement_release06.html, 2006)

The Mayor added, "While people can agree or disagree with the message, what's important is that it was art, and art, while sometimes controversial, is important — because what it does is to lift the soul."

His remarks are in stark contrast to his own policies on public art and those of prior interpretations of Siqueiros' mural. Almost seventy-four years prior to the date of Villaraigosa's speech, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, "David Alfaro Siqueiros, famed Mexican artist whose works have gained world-wide acclaim, will unveil his most recent creation, 'Tropical America,' at Plaza Art Center on Olvera Street tonight. The work is a colossal fresco portraying the past of the Americans … Measuring eighty-two by

eighteen feet, the fresco is said to be the largest on the continent and the first outdoor painting in cement executed with mechanical equipment" (Los Angeles Times, Oct. 9, 1932, pp.11).

The next day, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote a follow-up article on the mural's unveiling by stating, "David Alfaro Siqueiros' fresco…was proclaimed last night as the start of a new period in Southern California art," it follows, "Dean Cornwell, noted mural artist, who was the sponsor of the Olvera Street fresco, in his address at the dedication, said the completion of the art work undoubtedly will awaken a new appreciation for the decoration of blank walls." (Los Angeles Times, Oct. 10, 1932, pp. A2)

Wanting to place Los Angeles in the same level as New York, London, and Paris as epicenters of commerce and culture, the Los Angelino elite that helped commission the mural, sought to open a space for Los Angeles as a "global city" full of culture and opportunity. Yet, six months after its Oct. 9, 1932 original unveiling, "La America Tropical," was whitewashed from the walls of the Italian Hall and covered by layers of paint from the public. Siqueiros, who had arrived to Los Angeles as a political exile for his active participation in the Mexican Communist Party and fingered as the main suspect in the murder of Leon Trotsky, was deported back to Mexico.

What brought about such an extreme reaction to Siqueiros' art and his presence in Los Angeles? One possible answer, suggests that the imagery of the mural was way too controversial for the political and social climate of the early 1930s in Los Angeles. It depicted,

> An Indian peon, representing oppression by U.S. imperialism…crucified on a double cross capped by an American eagle. A Mayan pyramid in the background is overrun by vegetation, while an armed Peruvian peasant and a Mexican campesino (farmer) sit on a wall in the upper right corner, ready to defend themselves (www.olvera-street.com/html/siqueiros_mural.html, 2010).

For the mostly White elite of Los Angeles and especially for the city government, the mural was not an appropriate symbol for a new era in Los Angelino public art. Having funded the mural, the Olvera Street committee in charge of renovating the neighborhood, found his mural distasteful and anti-American. In response to state and public scrutiny of the mural's depiction of "American Imperialism," throughout the Americas, "La America Tropical," was covered up until it was discovered decades later.

Another factor suggests a deeper analysis of the racial, political, and economic climate of the early 1930s in Los Angeles. Siqueiros' arrival to Los Angeles in 1932 paralleled a massive anti-Mexican hysteria throughout the United States. Deep into the Great Depression, where over 60 percent of all Anglo-American workers were unemployed throughout the country, the United States government deployed one of its largest racially motivated repatriation missions of ethnic Mexicans, regardless of citizenship status. It is believed that over one-third of the 150,000 Mexicans living in Los Angeles were returned to Mexico or forced to leave during the Great Depression era (Sanchez 1993). The mass anti-Mexican hysteria in California led to the state legislature the California Anti-Alien Labor Act in 1931. The Anti-Alien Labor Act made it illegal for businesses to hire non-citizens, but was also effective in racially discriminating against Mexican legal residents and those U.S. born/naturalized as citizens. With an even higher unemployment rate among Mexicans in Los Angeles, due to the limited work opportunities because of racial discrimination, many were compelled to return to Mexico. A large number of those repatriated had never been to Mexico or had arrived to the U.S. as children during the violent Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917.

The Los Angeles anti-Mexican hysteria of the 1930s was itself a watershed period for Mexican communities throughout Los Angeles. George Sanchez (1993) notes three significant shifts within the internal politics of ethnic Mexican communities in Los

Angeles. The first shift signaled the end of the Mexican government's involvement in the lives of Mexicans living in the United States. For almost seventy years, the Mexican government, through its consulates, played an important but ambiguous role in the daily lives of Mexicans in Los Angeles. From working with the U.S. government to spy and arrest Mexican radical leaders and groups living in Los Angeles, to the promotion of Mexican culture and nationalism, the Mexican consulates played a key role in promoting state-sanctioned notions of Mexicaness to the diverse ethnic Mexican community in Los Angeles.

The 1930s signaled the end of the Mexican government's involvement in the daily lives of Mexican Angelinos. Agreeing with Sanchez on this first shift, Santamaria Gomez argues that the Mexican post-revolutionary consulate hoped to facilitate the safe repatriation of thousands of Mexicans from Los Angeles to Mexico. Santamaria Gomez mentions how the post-revolutionary Mexican ideologues wished to incorporate Mexicans from the United States into Mexican society because they saw them as more industrialized than their Mexican counterparts in Mexico. The repatriation of thousands of Mexicans though, signaled the last significant intervention the Mexican government would have in the United States until the 1970s. Although the Mexican government's involvement in Los Angeles often times contradicted the political aspirations of the lives of Mexicans in Los Angeles, the end of its promotion of Mexican culture and nationalism left the ethnic Mexican community without a clear connection to its Mexican roots.

The second shift involved the intense inter-ethnic conflict over the few public services available between those Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans that were able to stay in Los Angeles. As David Gutierrez (1995) points out, the inter-ethnic conflict between Mexicans reinforced broader White societal anti-Mexican hysteria that did not distinguish between citizenship status and national allegiance. George Sanchez

similarly states, “When the local officials encouraged all Chicanos to return to Mexico or fired Mexican Americans from jobs with impunity, repatriation made clear that Mexican ethnicity, rather than citizenship status, defined the Chicano experience in Los Angeles” (Sanchez, 1993:250). Although Mexican ethnicity was the major indicator for racist anti-Mexican hysteria, internal battles over citizenship status and national allegiance would fracture the ethnic Mexican community for decades to come.

The last major shift corresponds to the ethnic Mexican community’s response to the repatriation of their neighbors and relatives. Sanchez mentions how Mexican women, in particular, played an important role in creating neighborhood mutual aid organizations that offered services and food to those unemployed. They developed important networks throughout Los Angeles that provided the services the government was too strapped to offer its citizens. Through community organizing, Mexican women facilitated in filling an important role left behind by those repatriated and the absence of the Mexican consulate. Mexican women were also relatively less affected by mass unemployment during the Great Depression. Because they occupied positions in non-industrial sectors, Mexican women were less affected than their Mexican male counterparts by the decline in industrial labor. Although they did not occupy a large percentage of industrial jobs, Mexican women did organize in unions, oftentimes taking more militant roles within these organizations. These forms of political organizing by Mexican women would prove vital in the resurgence of Mexican American political activity in Los Angeles during the 1940s and 50s.

These three internal shifts within Mexican Los Angeles effectively changed the face of downtown Los Angeles. Due to the restructuring of White middle-class communities during the Great Depression, where many of these communities became enclosed and highly protected by the police, many Mexican families were forced out of

the downtown and north of downtown areas, often violently, and pushed to what would eventually become one of the largest enclaves of ethnic Mexicans outside of Mexico, the Greater Eastside of Los Angeles.

In terms of political organizing, with such a high rate of unemployment amongst poor Whites, Blacks, Mexicans, and Asians, the city developed public policies against the growing perception of mass delinquency and vagrancy. Political activism by labor organizers, in particular, was often criminalized and targeted by local police forces as anti-American. Political activism by Mexican women and men and other people of color, created a sense of "White Fear" amongst the depleted White working class and influential upper and middle classes in Los Angeles. Whites in Los Angeles and in Southern California feared that the economic downturn of the Great Depression would lead to the dismantling of racial hierarchies in the city. The eventual internal migration of thousands of Whites during the mid 1930s from the "dust bowls" of the Midwest, supplied Los Angeles and Southern California with a poor White underclass that could be racially manipulated to provide the popular base for the proliferation of anti-Mexican hysteria sentiment throughout the region. In turn, a new form of "nativism," promoted by a small White elite and protected by a fierce police-state, infused the region with a reinvigorated sense of Whiteness entitlement and White supremacy.

It is thus revealing how Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's remarks, seventy-four years later, on the unveiling of, "La America Tropical," symbolically whitewashed away the political conditions of Siqueiros' arrival to the United States and more importantly, the racial, political, economic, and social tensions associated with anti-Mexican sentiments throughout Los Angeles and Southern California in the 1930s. Putting the mural's political message up for debate, instead, Mayor Villaraigosa's speech, represents a series of political, economic, and social shifts, within, through, and outside of the state

and civil society, over the last several decades, that has culminated in a new and reinvigorated articulation of present-day anti-Mexican/Latino "nativism," spearheaded by neo-conservative politicians and organizations, and fueled by a renewed investment in whiteness and white supremacy throughout Los Angeles and Southern California.

THE MEXICAN AMERICAN GENERATION AND THE 1940S AND 1950S

Moving forward, the political motives of Mexican Americans, after the 1930s, have historically been written about as going against the logic of racial/ethnic solidarity or cross-racial/ethnic coalition building. This was not always the case. The repatriation of thousands of ethnic Mexicans to Mexico during the 1930s left a predominantly American Mexican population without a close connection to Mexico. Not having to split their allegiance between a Mexican ethnic identification and an American national identity, Mexican Americans sought greater political participation and inclusion in American society. Many Chicana/o historians consider the 1940s and 1950s as the "Mexican American Generation" (Garcia, 1989; Gomez-Quinones, 1990). This generation promoted civil rights and political inclusion as a strategy for achieving social equality. At times it accentuated the dominant culture of "whiteness" in the United States through a strong belief in national assimilation and acculturation, but it was almost always as a defense mechanism for the longer history of "second class citizenship" status and political, economic, and social disenfranchisement that ethnic Mexicans have faced since California became part of the United States in the mid 19th century. Yet, this so-called period of assimilation is counter-balanced by the prevailing form of union organizing by Mexican men and especially, as Vicki Ruiz (1998) points out, Mexican women who worked in the growing military industrial complex of Los Angeles, California. Unfortunately, the important union activism by Mexican American women

and men was constantly under attack by the growing anti-communist "red scare" of the McCarthy era in the United States.

Leading Up to the 1960s

The Mexican American generation of the 1940s and 1950s in Los Angeles made tremendous strides in struggling for and obtaining civil rights for Mexican American communities throughout the United States, yet they did so by problematically incorporating assimilationist policies to Americanize ethnic Mexicans into U.S. society. As the Mexican population started to grow throughout Los Angeles and other urban cities in the Southwest, due to the increase in birth rate of Mexican Americans and the influx of Mexican immigrants from Mexico, so did the amount of social services this primarily ethnic working class would need (Gomez-Quinones 1990). The Mexican American generation had made modest gains in political and economic mobility within ethnic Mexican communities, but for the most part, mass unemployment, lack of consistent social services, educational inequity, and limited health services defined the lives of most barrio dwellers. Although labor organizing and activism continued as it had in previous generations, the decreased participation of Mexicans in unions and the backlash against labor organizing produced by the anti-Communist McCarthy hearings made union organizing very difficult.

Internally, the influx of Mexican immigrants who migrated from Mexico during the zenith of the bi-national Bracero program (1945-1965) caused similar inter-ethnic conflicts as those faced during the 1930s. The pro-American identity of a Mexican American generation clashed with the growing face of barrios throughout Los Angeles. Resentment grew throughout many communities due to the fact that many Mexican migrant families were perceived as taking many of the social services Mexican

Americans were accustomed to receiving. Although Mexican American political leaders of the era fought for the civil rights of the entire ethnic Mexican community under the belief that liberal reform and democratic participation would eventually change the conditions faced by Mexicans in the U.S., the reaction by the State on the changing face of barrios in Los Angeles during the late 1950s and into the 1960s, placed many Mexican American political activists in a difficult and ambivalent position. Would Mexican Americans support their new neighbors, who shared the same ethnicity but had different experiences of Americanizing to mainstream society, or would they support the State's increased policing and economic management of this vulnerable population? The events that would lead to the eventual increase in political mobilization and unrest throughout ethnic Mexican communities in the late 1960s suggests that Mexican American politicians and community leaders were more prepared to deal with issues of racial and institutional discrimination than the economic inequality associated with a growing labor segmentation in barrios throughout the Southwest.

There is a sense, as in earlier periods, that inter-ethnic conflicts were racially and economically motivated. For almost two decades, many Mexican American communities had tried to assimilate into American society, oftentimes embracing their European ancestry in order to fit in within the Anglo dominated society. Local, regional, and national Mexican American and Latino organizations, such as the League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC), promoted Hispanic heritage and American values as a way to assimilate Spanish-speaking communities throughout the country. The influx of immigrants in the late 1950s and into the 1960s, who were minimally influenced by the U.S. possessive investment in whiteness but faced instead Mexico's own racial order of mestizaje, were racialized immediately upon their border crossing arrival to urban and rural areas throughout the Southwest. Many times, the segregated barrios of areas like

East Los Angeles, were the first places they socially encountered a process of racialization in the United States.

Omi and Winant's (1994) theory of “racial formation," places significance on the legal and extra-legal social processes that contribute to the racialization of different racial/ethnic groups. In the case of Mexican immigrants, this process started over a century ago, but as De Genova points out, the late 1950s and 1960s signified a watershed moment in the racialization of Mexican immigrants in the United States. It was during this period that the growth of undocumented migration to the United States increased in numbers. De Genova (2002) places this increase in undocumented Mexican labor in dialogue with a growing concern by Anglo society on the changing racial make-up of the United States. With a developing civil rights movement in the South to end racial apartheid in the United States and the influential anti-colonial movements throughout the world, the national borders of the United States, especially the US/Mexico border, became a key strategic area for the containment of external dissent on disenfranchised communities of color in the U.S.

Adding to the perceived ethnic and class divisions within the ethnic Mexican community, the conditions faced by Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants were oftentimes glossed over to other racialized groups in the United States. The national gaze focused on the growing Black civil rights movement in the South during this period and neglected to see the plight of Mexican workers in the cities and in the fields. Ignacio Garcia writes, “The black civil-rights movement and the white antiwar movement made the liberal agenda seem even more inadequate as Chicanos saw dissatisfaction within those groups they perceived as having more influence on mainstream society” (Garcia, 1998:6). Politically, the majority of the Mexican American community supported the efforts of the Democratic Party, voting almost exclusively on White Democratic

candidates during elections. Yet, once these White politicians were elected, the promises made to the Mexican American community were put on the backburner for other more pressing issues. This caused many Mexican American political leaders to question the democratic political system they had so faithfully embraced in prior generations. The uneasiness that Mexican Americans felt about the neglect of the U.S. government, led to their increasingly vocal critiques of the state and political mobilization during the mid to late 1960s. It also changed Mexican American sentiments towards Mexican immigrants, combining them towards one political goal of achieving equal rights for ethnic Mexicans in the United States, albeit at the expense of a cohesive analysis of racial/ethnic and class differences between both groups.

THE CHICANA/O MOVEMENT AND MEXICAN IMMIGRATION

Chicana/o historians debate, almost endlessly, the origins of the Chicano Movement. Many scholars of the Chicano Movement, or *Movimiento*, argue that the origins of an emerging political self-organization by ethnic Mexican communities in the United States during the late 1960s is a result of a political and cultural juncture between integrationists and those pursuing community self-determination (Gomez-Quinones, 1990). Chicano historian, Juan Gomez-Quinones, for instance, argues that this political and cultural juncture derives from the perceived disenchantment by ethnic Mexicans over their political, economic, and social status within an Anglo-dominated capitalist society and the strategies taken by Mexican American political leaders to change the conditions faced by people living in the barrio.

The civil rights era of the early part of the 1960s had ended legal racial segregation throughout the United States, but it had not succeeded in changing the economic situation of many communities of color, nor had it focused on the conditions

faced by urban communities of color. Although there was a significant increase in social mobility by Mexican Americans during the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, the majority of Mexican Americans were allowed limited political, educational, and economic mobility. For instance, many scholar activists, looking at racism and poverty during this era, equated barrio and ghetto life during the 1960s with internal colonialism (Munoz, 1990; Barrera, 1979). The internal colony model suggests that community enclaves, barrios, and ghettoes lack of political and economic mobility and the disproportionate presence of a police state, resembled that of a colonial relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. In this case, the barrios of East Los Angeles were colonies within the U.S. nation-state.

In response, the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, for instance, developed from the dissatisfaction of Mexican American youth with the educational inequity they faced in schools throughout the city and the disproportionate number of young Chicanos being sent to Vietnam. Mexican American working class youth, both in high school and at the university, spearheaded activism within and outside of the schools. As Gomez-Quinones states, "Student activism had a wide impact on many activities including community politics, where the older leadership and political practices were often challenged effectively" (Gomez-Quinones, 1990:119). Influenced by emerging third world movements internationally and the radicalism and discontent in urban areas throughout the country, Mexican American youth were responsible for the shift from the liberal reform tendencies of a prior generation of Mexicans to the focus on community self-determination through a cultural revival and self-identification as Chicanos. The term Chicano, a political identity that negated the American in Mexican American and embraced the Mexican, became the popular identification of young Mexican American

activists who sought community empowerment and social change for people of Mexican descent.

In Los Angeles, no greater example of the oppositional practices by Chicano youth exists than the East Los Angeles blowouts of March 1968. In response to a long history of educational inequity in the schools and the growing police brutality of Mexican youth throughout Los Angeles, Chicano youth organized, with the help of older Chicano university students, several large walk-outs of five East Los Angeles high schools. Thousands of students participated in the walkouts, causing concern by the predominantly White school board. Carlos Munoz Jr. writes extensively on the blowouts, having participated in them as a graduate student and organizer. Here he writes,

> On the morning of 3 March 1968, shouts of "Blow Out!" rang through the halls of Abraham Lincoln High School, a predominantly Mexican American school in East Los Angeles. Over a thousand students walked out of their classes, teacher Sal Castro among them. Waiting for them outside the school grounds were members of UMAS (United Mexican American Students) and various community activists. They distributed picket signs listing some of the thirty-six demands that had been developed by a community and student strike committee. The signs protested racist school policies and teachers and called for freedom of speech, the hiring of Mexican American teachers and administrators, and classes on Mexican American history and culture (Munoz, 1990:64).

Munoz description of the events that transpired in 1968, speaks to the well-organized nature of the student movement. It also speaks to the growing militancy of Chicana/o youth throughout Los Angeles. Munoz adds, "The slogans of 'Chicano Power!', 'Viva la Raza!', and 'Viva la Revolución!' that rang throughout the strike reflected an increasing militancy and radicalism…questioning authority and the status quo" (Munoz, 1990:65).

For Munoz and other Chicano scholars, the Chicano youth and student movement questioned the strategies and policies of a Mexican American accommodationist and

assimilationist middle-class that perceived Chicano youth as misguided. It also launched a resurgence in militancy and radicalism amongst Chicanos who now identified with a growing political consciousness, or Chicanismo, that sought community self-determination while still holding on to liberalist ideals of making claims for rights.

This political consciousness, or Chicanismo, as Ignacio Garcia (1997) defines it, combined the negative aspects of the American experience with the historical nostalgia of Mexico to create a new cultural milieu. This cultural milieu depended greatly on a "pro-barrio" philosophy that sought to change the racist and economic exploitation of the barrio and infuse it with cultural pride. Chicanismo invigorated the barrio with pride and hope; Gomez-Quinones writes,

> The emphasis of "Chicanismo" upon dignity, self-worth, pride, uniqueness, and a feeling of cultural rebirth made it attractive to many Mexicans in a way that cut across class, regional, and generational lines (Gomez-Quinones, 1990:104).

He further adds,

> In some way or other, most Mexicans had experienced, directly or indirectly, economic or social discrimination. These negative experiences increased the appeal of Chicanismo; it emphasized Mexican cultural consciousness and heritage as well as pride in speaking the Spanish language and economic opportunity (Gomez-Quinones, 1990:104).

The development of a Chicano identity, furthered by Chicanismo as its militant ethos, became the focal point for an emerging Chicano Movement that believed in self-identification and local, regional, and national self-determination. It also negated the influence of anything perceived as being part of an Anglo culture. Influenced by the growing Black power movement and the anti-colonial nationalist movements in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, the Chicana/o Movement provided Mexican American youth with the ability to self-define and determine their identity in what they perceived as an Anglo dominated society.

Chicano youth also created a sense of place through the construction of the term, Aztlán. Aztlán became the Chicano homeland and the basis for an ideological sense of political and cultural self-determination. By claiming the Southwestern United States as the original homeland of most Mexicans, Chicanos resisted the Anglo American dominance and occupation of their communities. Spearheaded by a rejuvenated sense of cultural nationalism, Gutierrez states, "Chicanos proposed to break Anglo hegemony by demanding community control or local autonomy over schools, elected offices, businesses, and even financial institutions located in areas of high Chicano concentration" (Gutierrez, 1995:185).

Yet much of this narrow nationalist rhetoric that permeated the Chicano movement was centered on a strong male chauvinism that privileged men in decision-making processes and in public leadership roles. The lack of a critical gender analysis within most Chicano Movement organizations relegated women to secretarial and supporting roles. Women's allegiances to El Movimiento were questioned when they took notice of these unequal power relations. Yet many women continued to persevere even under these difficult organizing conditions and continued questioning much of the Movements male chauvinism at its cultural root. But without a politics that could deal with gender relations within organizations, women were forced to create autonomous spaces where they could organize and heal from racial and gendered violence within communities and organizations.

The 1970s and the Influx of Mexican Undocumented Labor

The influx of Mexican undocumented labor to Los Angeles during the 1970s signaled another shift within the ethnic Mexican community. Although the Chicano Movement remained ambivalent towards immigration and Mexican immigrants, in

general, the cultural politics of the *Movimiento* period provided the tools for a major transformation in approaches by the native Mexican population. Gutierrez argues that the Chicano Movement inevitably helped change the historical perception of Mexican immigration and immigrants to the barrio.

The first half of the 20th century was a predominantly anti-immigrant era even within Mexican American communities. Inter-ethnic and class tensions exemplified much of the daily interactions between the native Mexican American population and the Mexican immigrant population of barrios throughout Los Angeles. The renewed and rejuvenated sense of *Mexicanidad* that emerged from the Chicano Movement period helped in changing the perception of many Mexican Americans on the vulnerable Mexican undocumented immigrant population.

With a growing undocumented Mexican labor force migrating to Los Angeles and a national recession hitting urban cities in 1970, a vicious state-backlash ensued in barrios throughout the Southwest. Gutierrez points to the increase in INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) raids on factories and businesses throughout Los Angeles as one of the deciding factors for the shift in focus by Chicana/o activists in Los Angeles.[7] People in the barrio equated the INS neighborhood sweeps to the police brutality and harassment they experienced at the hands of the LAPD and the LA County Sheriff's Department. Those who could remember the 1930s mass repatriations and effects of Operation Wetback the 1940s and 1950s saw the attacks on immigrants as an attack on all barrio dwellers. Yet, very few Chicano organizations came out early on against the repression on undocumented immigrants. This clear contradiction lead to the

[7] David Gutierrez writes, that from 1967 to 1977, the number of undocumented people apprehended by the border patrol and the INS increased dramatically every year. For instance, in 1967 there were 100,000 apprehensions by the INS. This number grew to 500,000 by 1970 and to 680,000 by 1974. By 1977, over one million people had been apprehended by the border patrol and the INS. (OJO: I actually think that this should be in the actual text and not in the footnotes. But it's your call.)

development of broader focused Leftist-leaning Chicano and Mexicano organizations in Los Angeles. The most well-documented organization, the Centro de Acción Social y Autonomo (CASA) was founded in 1968.

CASA, unlike any other Chicana/o grassroots organization, organized for the rights of undocumented Mexicans in Los Angeles and in other major cities throughout the Southwest. Founded by veteran labor leaders, Bert Corona and Soledad Alatorre, CASA differed from the cultural nationalist tendencies of other Chicano organizations within the Chicano Movement and instead focused their organizing around labor and human rights. Similar to the mutualist neighborhood organizations of the 1920s and 1930s in Los Angeles, CASA provided legal and social services to undocumented workers (Pulido, 2006; Gutierrez, 1995). They proved to be the first Chicano era organization to look at the relationship between immigration, Mexican identity, and the status of Mexican Americans in the United States. For CASA activists, the growing undocumented labor force deserved the same workers rights as Mexican Americans and other racial/ethnic groups. Their vision of a "*Pueblo sin Fronteras*" (a people without borders) differed from the Chicano vision of Aztlán and broadened the concept of cultural nationalism to include an "internationalist" vision.

For many CASA organizers, Chicano identity and the concept of Aztlán negated the fact that they were all ethnically Mexican. As Chavez and others write, CASA activists would regularly write and challenge other Chicano leaders use of the term Chicano. The Marxist-Leninist tendencies within CASA saw the narrow nationalism of many Chicano groups as lacking a serious class analysis of the continued economic and labor exploitation of Mexican communities from Los Angeles all the way to Mexico. Pulido argues that CASA also built necessary alliances with the mostly White New Left, the Black Panthers, and other revolutionary nationalist groups of the era. These alliances

contradicted the separatist politics of many Chicano nationalist organizations. In fact, out of most of the racial/ethnic based revolutionary nationalist groups in Los Angeles, CASA was the only one to have Whites and other racial/ethnic groups as part of their collective.[8]

Although CASA was definitely more radical than most Chicano groups, who had some conservative tendencies within their organizing, they were nevertheless similar in terms of the prevailing gender politics within their organization. Like most Chicano organizations, Chicanas and Mexicanas occupied subservient roles to those of male organizers; this included serving as cooks and secretaries. Yet CASA did have clear differences with their Movimiento counterparts. Chicanas did have leadership positions within CASA and were responsible for editing and writing articles for its regional newspapers.

The Origins of a Latino Managerial Class in Los Angeles

The Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 1970s had mixed effects within the diverse racialized ethnic Mexican community of Los Angeles. For instance, the construction of a "Chicano" identity by students, artists, and activists showed the complexity of the racialized ethnic Mexican community in Los Angeles. For many Mexican Americans, Chicano was too radical an identity. The majority of the Mexican American population grew up during the "Americanization" and ethnic reform periods of the 1940s and 1950s. They continued to believe that working within the system would provide greater acceptance and consideration by the white social order, the city, state, and federal government. The confrontational politics associated with a Chicano identity became a threat to the Mexican American generation's political aspirations. On the other hand, Mexican immigrants shared a different opinion on the use of the term Chicano.

[8] Pulido mentions that this percentage was small but still showed how CASA's politics were different from more nationalist leaning organizations in the barrios of Los Angeles.

For many Mexican immigrants, the term Chicano entailed the re-articulation of a Mexican American identity that was already fraught with various ideological divisions. Mexican immigrants did not understand why Chicana/o youth wanted to self-identify as Chicano when they were clearly ethnic Mexican. Whether Mexican American or Chicano, Mexican immigrants continued to have difficult relationships with their U.S. counterparts especially during the difficult economic times of the 1970s.

Chicana and Chicano historians of the Movimiento period argue that the ambivalent reaction by different sectors of the ethnic Mexican community shows not only the complexity and heterogeneity of the barrio but also symbolizes how many of these groups were not radical or militant but moderately liberal and/or conservative (Gomez-Quinones, 1990). Although many racialized ethnic Mexicans were not politically active, they did share several concerns. David Gutierrez (1995) and others write that although many disagreed with a Chicano identity, the majority saw their tactics and strategies as refreshingly different. George Mariscal, (2005) for example, focuses on the Vietnam War's influence on the Chicano community by arguing how the politically heterogeneous barrio came together at various points to fight against the disproportionate number of Mexican Americans drafted to serve in the War. Mariscal argues, that the Mexican community in Los Angeles was in fact one of the most organized anti-war communities in the United States. For instance, the August 29, 1970 Chicano moratorium in East Los Angeles was the largest mobilization of people against the Vietnam War outside of the Marches in Washington D.C.

The *Movimiento's* broad range of influence (albeit with no concrete political plan or goals), opened several opportunities for Mexican American political and business leaders, who originally had scolded activists and students for their confrontational politics, to mesh within the Chicano Movement's milieu. Fearing they would lose their

limited political power in Los Angeles, these Mexican American politicians took on many of the struggles that Chicano activists were fighting for. For many Mexican American old guard politicos, choosing to identify with the influential Chicano movement represented more of a political strategy than an embracing of Chicanos' confrontational politics.

This undoubtedly proved to be the origins of the present day Chicano and Latino professional and managerial class in Los Angeles. As the Chicano Movement made a slow decline in social and political mobilization and shifted gears to more reformist and institutional activism, Chicana/o activists moved from furthering the goals of their organization or collective and instead went back to working within the system they had so vocally opposed. Faced with the counter-insurgency policies of the Federal government program, COINTELPRO, which infiltrated and fragmented organizations, jailed, and in some cases murdered, key leaders of more militant strands of the Movimiento, the major organizations and collectives of the Chicana/o movement re-organized themselves to deal with the drastic demographic changes that would occur in the late 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. These demographic changes would alter the lives of racialized ethnic Mexican communities throughout Los Angeles with mixed results.

THE MATURATION OF NEOLIBERAL WHITE SUPREMACY IN LOS ANGELES

> Racism has never stood still or remained unchanged in history. Today we see new forms emerging from the rapid growth of globalization. We can see that white supremacy has become more global than ever and millions of people of color have become globalized. (Martinez, 1993; 2004)

As the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s shed light on, the 20th century evolution of Los Angeles was based on the racist premise of exclusion and enclosure of black, brown, red, and yellow bodies into ethnic enclaves, barrios and ghettoes. These are marginal spatial areas, often in some of the most rugged and uninhabitable

geographies in the city that through very precise forms of control, surveillance, and highly militarized policing, are out of the visual site of white communities in Los Angeles. The rationale for these forms of exclusion and enclosures began in the early 20th century with the urban planning of Los Angeles as the last possible "oasis" for whites to live and find work. Having failed to contain white and non-white bodies from actively engaging in everyday public practices of labor and leisure, the industrial cities of the Midwest and North saw immense amount of internal migration to Los Angeles by whites who wanted to escape the pluri-racial neighborhoods of such cities like Chicago and New York. For these white families, Los Angeles became the last refuge for whites to build a city in their image.

The creation of suburban communities in Los Angeles during the 1940's and 1950's, predominantly constructed for the booming working-class and middle-class white population that saw their incomes soar due to the well-paying jobs of the dominant military industrial complex of the region, captured the sentiments of whites who searched for a way to live a "private life" away from the corruption and violence of the city. Backed by racial real estate covenants that excluded families of color from moving into these white communities, the white suburbs of Los Angeles became the beacons of white autonomy, freedom, and prosperity that the urban core could not provide. Consequently, the 1960's marked the end of legal "racial apartheid" in the United States. Decades of Black, Mexican American, Asian American, and Latino political organizing led to the eventual dismantling of the "separate but equal" Jim Crow laws throughout the US. The Black Civil Rights Movement in particular influenced the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act that abolished discriminatory practices in areas of employment, housing, and voting participation. Yet in Los Angeles, like in many large cities throughout the United States, federal and state legislative changes to

end centuries of racialized "second-class" citizenship was perceived as a threat to the White hegemonic order of Southern California. In response, many predominantly White communities in Los Angeles, feeling that the mass protests and federal laws would displace their stranglehold on the political, economic, and social hierarchies of Los Angeles, tried to prevent the dismantling of their perceived homogenous white borders by finding loopholes within the civil rights laws to continue discriminating against racialized groups from integrating into their communities. Growing social unrest in urban cities during the early to mid-1960s, like the Watts rebellion in 1965, only accentuated the hysteria and panic felt by Whites, as the corporate media facilitated in spreading a hyper-racialized form of yellow journalism with anti-white overtones in the United States, adding to the anxiety felt by many Whites, both liberal, moderate, and conservative. The social unrest, justifiably felt by many urban disenfranchised communities, coupled with the creation of reactionary federal social programs for racialized and poor communities under the Lyndon B. Johnson presidency's "War on Poverty" and the growth of the racial/ethnic power movements of the mid to late 1960s, led to the eventual re-inscription of "whiteness" and "White Supremacy" throughout Los Angeles and the United States.

The 1970's in Los Angeles, on the other hand, was ushered in not only with a series of economic crises but also the restructuring of the economic order towards its proliferation as a financial center in a globally integrated economy. This came on the heels of the de-industrialization of the region's traditional heavy manufacturing industries and the re-industrialization of a more flexible light manufacturing industry and a growing service sector. These new economic industries were low-paying non-unionized jobs that were filled by an immigrant population comprised of mostly Mexican women. The integration of the region into an important financial node within a global economy, coupled with the loss of well-paying unionized jobs, re-fashioned the social and

economic order of the region in such a way that coupled with the racial/ethnic demographic shifts towards a non-white majority by the end of the decade, saw an immediate social response by the shrinking white middle-class suburban communities of the region. George Lipsitz argues of the 1970's,

> Since 1973, a combination of deindustrialization, economic restructuring, neoconservative politics, austerity economics, and the transformation of a market economy into a privatized market society (in which every personal relation is permeated by commodity relations) has revolutionized U.S. society. (Lipsitz, 1998: 83)

He continues,

> Stagnation of real wages, automation-generated unemployment, the evisceration of the welfare state, threats to intergenerational upward mobility, privatization of public resources, and polarization by class, race, and gender have altered the nature of individual and collective life in this country. At the same time, the aggrandizement of property rights over human rights has promoted greed, materialism, and narcissism focused on consumer goods, personal pleasure, and immediate gratification. (ibid)

What Lipsitz describes is the contemporary emergence of a "possessive investment in whiteness" that produces a hegemonic set of normative social relations embedded in American society. By the late 1970's, white middle-class suburban anxieties were increasingly growing stronger, as their dreams of living a safe, clean, and guarded middle-class life were slowly evaporating due to the impact of the global economy on suburban white workers. The city of Los Angeles longstanding Black Mayor Tom Bradley's multicultural coalition had attempted to disrupt the old white social order by spreading federal and local funds on community development projects, which included rebuilding schools, roads, highways, and directing investment opportunities to the inner city. Such expenditures that benefited both inner city and suburban communities in tough economic times were seen as wasteful spending by white middle-class communities who wanted to keep their communities racially segregated from the rest of Los Angeles. In

response, the late 1970's saw the rise of one of the most powerful neo-conservative movements in the United States. Its apex occurred in 1978 with the passing of Proposition 13.

In 1978, the California Taxpayers League, under Howard Jarvis, and with the backing of such homeowner associations as the Sherman Oaks Association, the Hillside and Canyon Federations, mobilized over 1.3 million voters to pass the controversial Proposition 13. In the process, the proposition virtually eliminated millions of dollars in property tax revenues for cities throughout the state. (Davis, 1990) Supported by a majority of frightened and shrinking white suburban middle-class communities and controlled by a white upper-middle class movement of "homeowner associations" like the Sherman Oaks Association, Proposition 13 capitulated years of racial and economic anxiety on the part of white suburban communities towards non-white inner city communities and the "excessive" government spending on public services for these populations. Although the first half of the 1970's in the United States is characterized by an ongoing economic recession that produced mass unemployment and inflation, for some areas, like the Southern California suburbs, as Mike Davis contends, their home values skyrocketed to unprecedented highs. Wanting to reap and keep the rewards of these inflated home values, white middle-class suburban communities created one of the most formidable social movements against government social spending in the history of the United States.

The tax revolts that spurred the passage of Proposition 13 in California were not new to the Southern California region. In fact these highly coordinated and funded movements were common occurrences in Los Angeles since the creation of suburban communities in the 1950's. They were unique in that they paralleled other growing movements in suburban Southern California to stop racial and economic integration.

Indeed, the 1970's marked a period of extreme economic, political, and social change to the social landscapes of Los Angeles, California. Of these extreme changes, the demographic shift from a white majority in 1970 to a non-white majority by 1980, masked the fears by white suburbanites on the growing intrusion of black and brown populations to their "pure" white communities. Proposition 13, in essence, was one of many successful attempts to shift the racial/social order of the region towards the hands of a forming conservative upper middle-class suburban elite who found an opportunity to frame the politics of the region for decades to come.

The effects of the proposition on inner city communities were astonishing. The millions of dollars lost in tax revenues by the city of Los Angeles surmounted in an immediate loss of over 60% of its prior budget. The city's infrastructural budget was cut extensively, impacting the cleaning, repairing, and maintenance of streets, parks, and commercial areas in and around inner city communities in Los Angeles. Moreover, the passing of Proposition 13 began a more than a decade long battle to end public funding for social programs for the most needy populations in the region.

The passing of Proposition 13 in 1978 and the anti-tax and anti-busing revolts of the late 1970's were part of a larger struggle in suburban communities across Southern California and Los Angeles to racially segregate the white suburban "have's" from the poor non-white working class "have not's" of the inner city. It was an "autonomous" movement based on the white backlash towards the Keynesian welfare-state and its funding of social programs and public education throughout the region. Indeed, its impact as a movement found resonance in the expanding economic shift towards neoliberal capitalism and its flexible and mobile global industries.

In a conversation with Roberto Flores, co-founder of the Zapatista-inspired autonomous space, the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE, and longtime community organizer

in East Los Angeles about Proposition 13, its impact on the inner city and community organizing in general. Roberto, one of the first Chicano activists to travel to Chiapas after the Zapatista uprising in 1994 responded candidly:

> Prop. 13 was an autonomous movement for the rich. Think of it that way. If what we are trying to do is collectively rebuild our communities from below, desde abajo, then the opposite was the movement that brought Prop. 13. They were truly wanting to separate themselves from the city and from those that didn't look like them. They were highly organized and still are. Their pockets are filled with corporate lobbyists, politicians, real estate investors, and wealthy businessmen. When you hear about the secession movement in the Valley, you get goose bumps all over because of what Prop. 13 meant to the communities in Los Angeles. Overnight, our schools lost their money for books, teachers, better buildings and supplies. Our streets were left without funding to fix potholes or put up stop signs. And our youth were left without work when the seed money for the JobCorps ran out…Money for law enforcement went usually to protect the wealthy and control and jail our youth. It started a very difficult journey for our communities that we are barely starting to find solutions to. Their autonomy is not our autonomy. And we hold that to be true every day.

The effects of Proposition 13 and the rise of the neo-conservative movement in Southern California were a "death sentence" on the lives of barrio and ghetto dwellers throughout Los Angeles, California. The lack of funding for public schools, health clinics, social programs, and maintenance of roads, streets, and parks in the inner city are a result of the late 1970's tax revolts in California.

After the success of Proposition 13, white suburbanites now took their anger out on the social welfare system in the United States. This shift against popular discourses over social responsibility and welfare took shape during the rise of the neo-conservative era of the 1980's in the United States. The election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980 almost exclusively meant the end of the social welfare era and the introduction of the neoliberal era in the United States. During the Reagan administration, the popular

discourse over social welfare went from one that focused on social responsibility to one that promoted individual responsibility.

Whereas in a prior period, modern white supremacy functioned geographically through the separation of whites from non-whites into distinct enclosed communities, the end of the welfare state assured a different social relationship within the racial/social order of the region. With the state weakened by the imposition of the global market to dictate its responsibility to its citizens, it reconfigured itself as a facilitator of the global market. Neoliberal white supremacy found a "common" enemy in anyone who it believes will take its freedom and power away. In turn, its ability to take freedom from others and defeat anyone it feels as threatening its position in the social order of the region is only through its interwoven relationship with a police force it used to strike fear and maintain control over communities of color throughout the region. This strategy was effective in producing "law and order" policies that led to the policing and imprisonment of youth of color at alarming rates and that lead to the construction of more prisons and jails to house this criminalized population.

SUMMARY

The city of *Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles de Porciúncula*, founded in 1781 by Spanish missionaries and soldiers, has throughout its long history spanning over two hundred years occupied an interstitial place in the imaginary of both colonizer and colonized. For the Spanish crown and clergy, it was a place to missionize and exploit the native population living in the region. For the native peoples of the area, it meant an end to their traditional ways of living and their entry into a cruel life of servitude.

For most of the last half of the 19th century, the Mexican population of Los Angeles diminished to several thousand inhabitants. Anglo settlers arrived to Los

Angeles displacing the old Californio families from their lands and reconfigured the racial order of the region. Similar to what David Montejano (1987) describes as a shift in power relations between Mexicans and Anglos in South Texas during the same period, Mexican land owners in Los Angeles also lost most of their land to Anglos who used force and the legal court system to take lands from the Mexican population of the region. (Almaguer, 1994) In turn, Mexicans who once owned large amounts of land were forced to also become laborers for the growing Anglo dominated city of Los Angeles, California.

Towards the end of the 19th century and entering the 20th century, the Mexican population of Los Angeles started to grow exponentially due to the political and economic turmoil in Mexico. Mexicans from the interior of Mexico, fleeing the Porfirio Diaz regime and later the beginning of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) arrived to Los Angeles via the expansive Mexican railroad system by the thousands. Rapidly replacing the older Mexican/Californio population this recently arrived Mexican population was received with the same type of racial animosity that previous generations of Mexicans faced in California. At the time, Los Angeles had built its image as the last paradise for white Americans to escape the multicultural enclaves of the urban centers in the Midwest and Northeast of the United States. Fearing the presence of Asian, Black, and Mexican labor arriving to Los Angeles, the white elite of Los Angeles attempted to police and enclose neighborhoods by race, separating them from white areas. Mexicans in particular, were seen as a threat not only to the white social order of Los Angeles but also as possible subversives, revolutionaries, and seditionists. The case of Ricardo Flores Magon and the PLM (Partido Liberación Mexicano) provided the necessary impetus to treat Mexican immigrants as possible subversives and terrorists who were bringing "revolution" to the United States. These discourses over the growth of Mexican

radicalism in Los Angeles attracted an increase in policing and surveillance of Mexican communities who at the time were multicultural in character.

Although these discourses of a radical Mexican invasion were promoted in local newspapers throughout Southern California, the need for cheap Mexican labor also created another type of relationship with the growing Mexican community of Los Angeles. Primarily a booming agricultural center, the areas around Los Angeles attracted Mexican agricultural labor to work the citrus fields of the region. A growing dependency on Mexican labor during the 1920's was counterbalanced by an even greater concern over the unauthorized entry of Mexican labor across the Mexico/US border. With such a highly racialized, vulnerable and disposable labor force responsible for the growth of the region, any economic crisis quickly created a backlash against this population.

The economic depression of the 1930's impacted the Los Angeles area greatly. Mexican labor, both in the fields and in the factories, were targeted and scapegoated in the media as taking the few jobs "Americans" should have. This panic lead to the mass deportation of Mexican immigrants and US born Mexicans back to Mexico. By the 1940's, the ethnic Mexican community of Los Angeles had experienced a level of acculturation to "American society." Mexican American men served in the military during WWII and were highly decorated for valor. Mexican American women entered the workforce as factory workers in the military industrial complex of the region. These Mexican American women organized alongside white and African American workers for better working conditions and wages. Often referred to as the "Mexican American generation", ethnic Mexican men, who were arriving from war as heroes but facing the same type of racial discrimination they faced before they left to war, and Mexican American women who were organizing for better working conditions in the factories, started to organize for equal rights.

By the 1960s, Los Angeles became the epicenter to a new and vibrant political and cultural movement for civil rights. Ethnic Mexicans in East Los Angeles, in particular, who felt that the acculturation that was characteristic of the 1940s and 1950s had not produced any significant gains in civil rights looked to self-affirm their cultural connection to their "Mexican" roots while also embracing their sense of community by focusing on the plight of ethnic Mexicans in the barrio. What would be defined as the Chicano Movimiento in Los Angeles became a political and cultural insurgency spearheaded by a generation of ethnic Mexican youth who formed a formidable critique against US racial, economic, and educational inequality. Inspired by the Black Civil Rights movement and other ethnic based social movements of the era, these ethnic Mexican youth used the term, Chicano, to define their interstitial identity as neither from Mexico nor accepted in the United States. The term Chicano would define this generation's political and cultural search for "self-determination."

As a response to the effectiveness of the Chicano Movimiento and other anti-colonial movements throughout the world, a global recession during the early 1970s and a domestic racial backlash against the social programs won by the Black Civil Rights movement opened the doors for the appearance of "neoliberal white supremacy" in Los Angeles. Neoliberal white supremacy coincided with the ushering in of the neoliberal globalization era and the use of particular strategies and technologies that produced specific sets of social relations that were manufactured, dependent, and reproduced by the market form and the racial hierarchies of a particular region. In turn, these social relations that are predicated on the market and race reflected such values like individualism, property ownership, and the end to "big government" spending on social services. As Chapter 2 will uncover, these social relations would produce amongst a

young first generation and immigrant population of racialized ethnic Mexicans and Latinos, a sense of hopelessness and fear throughout their daily lives.

CHAPTER 2

Loneliness and Despair: Life in the Global City

I arrived to East Los Angeles in early May 2005 amidst growing racial tensions between the African American and Latino communities of Los Angeles. Several months of physical altercations between Black and Latino youth at Jefferson High School, a local South Central high school near downtown, grew like wildfire, spreading concern that the violence would tumble out into the streets. Adding to the media attention on the recent "race riots" at Jefferson High, several news stations reported that the violence in the high schools was connected to recent Black and Latino gang feuds in Los Angeles.[9] As was the case with most news reports on the growing Black and Latino tensions in public schools, the local news media made every effort to intersect these violent but isolated events to broader hot-button issues like the growing immigration "problem" in the United States and the constant street violence of the inner city.

The *Los Angeles Times*, in an effort to "objectively" report on the Jefferson High School violence, added several quotes from Black students and their parents depicting the Latino students as "illegal," justifying the wide-spread anti-immigrant hysteria of the region. In comparison, those Latino students and families interviewed characterized the small number of Black students on the Jefferson High campus as "violent" and "overly aggressive." The *Times* article also made it a point to highlight the disproportionate number of Latinos at Jefferson high school versus the small number of African American

[9] During the spring of 2005, several news stations reported a series of freeway shooting in Los Angeles. The manufactured reason for the shootings was an apparent feud between Chicano and Black California prison gangs. Although most news reports did not confirm the race or ethnicity of the motorists who were shot or whether they were gang affiliated, the news media played this tension out in such a way that they reported unconfirmed characteristics of the injured motorists as resembling gang clothing. This included motorists wearing white t-shirts, having shaved heads or buzz cuts and, of course, being Black or Brown. All police accounts of the random shootings found no link between any of the shootings.

youth who attended the school in order to make a visible connection to the changing racial/ethnic make-up of a historically black area of Los Angeles and its most recent transformation into a Mexican and Latino immigrant barrio.

Several weeks after arriving to Los Angeles, I attended a community forum on the high school "race riots" at a local South Central church hall. At the event, activists, community organizers, church officials, and concerned parents met with groups of high school students about the growing number of incidents in the schools. Most of the talking was done by the adults in the audience and the youth seemed to have a small voice in an otherwise heated debate over who started what. The meeting began with opening words from several local activists and moved on to an open forum where parents and neighbors could voice their concerns. As the meeting turned to an open forum, both African American and Latino parents proceeded to talk about their concerns over the lack of control on the part of the school administration and the police. Shouts of "we want more police!" scattered throughout the hall. Other parents yelled: "We need more security. Arrest those responsible." Although there were also comments and questions made about the socioeconomic conditions that could have possibly given rise to the outburst of violence in the poorly funded schools of the Los Angeles inner city, most participants simply wanted more security and control of the schools, even if it meant suspending and arresting students believed to have started the incidents.

I noticed that the youth in the audience were quietly sitting down and some looked disturbed by the comments. Many of them kept coming in and out of the hall. There was little eye contact between the Black students and the Latino students, only making the anxiety in the hall thicken. Very few of the Black and Latino youth present spoke during the open forum. Those that did speak had a different message. In my field

notes, I wrote down the brief comments of one Latina youth that spoke in front of the crowded hall.

> We are tired of feeling alone. Yes, I am scared something might happen again. But I am mostly feeling alone… We don't need more security or police. I know we see them a lot. Inside the school, outside the school, by our houses, even walking to the store. All we want is to stop feeling alone.

After she spoke, more students came up and gave similar speeches. Many of them talked about how their schools did not have enough funding or that there were not any jobs or opportunities for them outside of school. Very few of them spoke about the racial tensions that the media and parents at the meeting attributed to the violence.

As I returned to my apartment in El Sereno and began what would be two years of fieldwork throughout the greater Los Angeles area, the feeling of loneliness expressed by the young Latina that night in front of the crowded community open forum in South Central stayed with me as I personally tried to cope with living in an enormous and isolating city like Los Angeles. I would revisit her words frequently in my work because they resonated greatly with the life histories and interviews I conducted with a prior generation of Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o and Latina/o artists, musicians, activists, and community organizers that grew up with a similar sense of "loneliness" and "despair" during the 1980s and 1990s.

Chapter Overview

As an anthropologist, understanding the narratives and life histories of the people one is working with is an important part of putting the puzzle pieces together of social processes and structures that affect populations like the racialized ethnic Mexican population of Los Angeles, California. This chapter provides a bridge towards understanding the loneliness and fear expressed by Zapatista-inspired Chicanas/os in Los

Angeles and the hope resonating from the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico. I discuss through ethnographic vignettes and life histories of various self-identified Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activists, their recollections of "loneliness" and "despair" within the context of facing racism and police brutality, discrimination at school, and changes to the urban landscapes of a "global city" like Los Angeles.

In the following sections, I ask the following questions: What are the root causes for the feelings of "loneliness" and "despair" expressed by Chicana/o youth in Los Angeles, California? How do Chicana/o youth negotiate, resist, and navigate these root causes? And, how does the negation of these root causes by Chicana/o youth reflect their capacity to change the social conditions that surround them in their daily lives? These questions will ground our understanding of the emergence of a working-class youth-led Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activism in the 1990s not as a spontaneous social movement sprouting from the January 1, 1994 Zapatista uprising, but rather as a gradual encounter of individuals and communities that coalesced during that period to contest local, regional, national, and global injustices.

THE 1992 LOS ANGELES REBELLION AND THE RISE OF A LATINO METROPOLIS

The evening of April 29, 1992, Los Angeles burned. The verdict of "not guilty" that freed four Los Angeles police officers on trial for brutally beating black motorist Rodney King spilled quickly outside of the Simi Valley, California courtroom and arrived at the doorsteps of Americans who received the news with shock and disbelief. In urban areas throughout the United States the response took on a different tone. Anger and rage at the overtly racist decision by the majority white jury manifested in growing outbreaks of violence and destruction of property throughout the barrios and ghettos of South Central LA. By the early evening, billowing stacks of smoke and fire filled the

smoggy air, as thousands took to the streets of Los Angeles and other major cities to vent their discontent with the verdict.

A week later, "order" was declared throughout South Central Los Angeles, prompting city and federal officials, media pundits, community organizers, and academics to initiate late discussions on the reasons for the rebellion. It became clear in several articles written in the *Los Angeles Times* that the Los Angeles rebellion was not an isolated event nor was it only about the acquittal of the four police officers. Instead, the murky and complex truth rose up through the cracks of the uneven streets of Los Angeles. Racism and racial inequality were the only logical explanation for the rebellions. Years of neglect of the inner cities of the United States slowly simmered resentments and anger by African Americans in the "riot zone," who directed their anger at local Korean and Asian market owners, and at Mexican and Latino migrants who were replacing them as South Central LA's majority. Numerous studies and reports conducted after the Los Angeles rebellions concluded what many living in the hot zones of the riots already knew -- a decade of rollbacks and mismanagement of social welfare funds for the inner city, mass unemployment among Black and Latino youth (many of them undocumented and recent arrivals), and a contentious relationship between the Los Angeles Police Department and communities of color all contributed to the spontaneous reaction by thousands of people over the span of several days in 1992. The solutions offered by many of these official and un-official reports reflected the shifting nature of the racial/social order in the city, region, state, and country as a whole. Many of the liberal politicians pursued economic rejuvenation projects that would energize job growth for inner city populations. Yet, most of these projects failed miserably as companies and businesses refused to invest in the inner city. In terms of state and federal funds, the 1980s represented the systematic dismantling of the welfare-state under Ronald Reagan's

administration, destroying the safety net for thousands of people living in and around the hot zones of the rebellion. Conservative politicians, on the other hand, called for more drastic "law and order" measures to secure the safety of their mostly white middle-class constituents living in the gated communities and suburbs of the greater Los Angeles area. In either case, the city and nation had awakened after the Los Angeles rebellions to a familiar face it felt it had left behind. Racism, racial terror, and economic inequality continued to haunt Los Angeles' past, present, and future.

Transnational communities

A close look at the demographic statistics of the "riot zone" shows the discrepancies between the media depictions of an "African American riot," similar to the bloody 1965 Watts rebellions, and the everyday reality of the area. Of the population that resided in the "riot zone," over 49 percent of them were Latinos. This is in comparison to 36.4 percent for African Americans and 7.1 percent for Asian/Pacific Islanders. Of the 49 percent of Latinos that lived in the "riot zone" most of them were foreign-born, with at least 10 years living in the area. Another huge misconception was the racial/ethnic makeup of the people arrested during the two weeks of the rebellion. Fifty-one percent of those arrested were Latino, 38 percent were African American, 9 percent were white, and 2 percent were of Asian descent. What are we to make of these astonishing statistics that place foreign-born Latinos in the middle of what was deemed another "Black" rebellion by media pundits and public officials? The answer to this question stems in the economic and demographic shifts occurring in Los Angeles since the 1970s, for which the increase of racialized ethnic Mexican and Latino migration to the region is the main result.

Beginning in the late 1960s and ending in the early 1990s, the city of Los Angeles underwent a major overhaul of its industrial production sectors. Severe global economic

crisis throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s caused a de-industrialization of the major industries in Los Angeles, who moved to cheaper outsourced forms of production outside of the United States. The heavy manufacturing industries, like the auto, rubber, and aviation industries that for decades hired Mexican American, Black, and white working class workers, closed their doors causing the rate of unemployment to skyrocket amongst communities of color in particular. Besides being well-paid jobs, these occupations had been a critical space for activism and union organizing for communities in Los Angeles in an otherwise "open shop" economy. The de-industrialization of these industries altered and eliminated years of organizing, important to the racial/ethnic and economic social relations of the region. In their place, low-wage, anti-union, and de-skilled manufacturing industries arrived, hiring a new population of workers that were themselves displaced by the global economic crisis in their home countries.

The rise of what is considered the post-fordist economy during the 1970s gave birth to what Mike Davis (2001) and others call the "Latino Metropolis." Latin American and Asian immigrants arrived to Los Angeles, California to work in the textile, low-tech, and garment industries of the new economy that replaced the heavy manufacturing industries of a prior generation of workers. This new racial division of labor, in which Mexicana and Latina women make a large proportion of the textile and garment workers, redistributed the types of work other racial groups were concentrated in. Whites, for instance, tended to be concentrated in the private-sector and in management positions. Asians were concentrated in low-tech and light industries. Blacks on the other hand, found work in civil service occupations and a limited amount in the service sector as janitors and maids.

These economic and labor changes all affected the racial/ethnic demographic makeup of the city. For most of the 20th century, Los Angeles has had a majority white

population. For instance, changes to the post-WWII economy that relied on the military industrial workforce of white, Mexican, and Black women, created greater opportunities for white workers to move out of working-class neighborhoods where they shared space with other racialized groups. White workers' upward mobility into the middle-class during the 1950s meant leaving the urban core for white segregated suburban communities on the periphery of the city. Since then, non-white racialized groups like Mexicans, Asians, and Blacks have, for the most part, lived in segregated enclaves and communities, apart from whites. By 1970, Los Angeles became one of the most segregated cities in the United States with 70 percent of the population white Anglos. This would be the demographic peak for whites in Los Angeles, as population increases amongst traditional racialized groups increased and more importantly, new immigration to the region from Latin America and Asia replaced white as the racial majority in the city. By 1980, 60 percent of the population of Los Angeles was non-white, making Los Angeles one of the most diverse cities in the world. Of this 60 percent, the majority of the population were foreign-born and from Mexico or Latin America. Raymond Rocco suggests that from 1980-1990 the county of Los Angeles grew 1.38 million of which 1.24 million or 89 percent was Latino.

As Valle and Torres (1998) argue, structural changes associated with the emergence of a postindustrial economy reconfigured the city's social relations in such a way that it shifted the demographic outlook of most inner city neighborhoods. In particular, areas of Los Angeles that were predominantly inhabited by the waged and unwaged Black working-class but had been affected by the loss of well-paying manufacturing jobs during the 1980s were now rapidly introduced to new populations of mostly Mexican and Latin American immigrants who filled the new racialized service sector and light manufacturing jobs throughout the city. This is symbolic of an emergent

"transnational community" of racialized ethnic Mexicans and Latinos who are no longer moving or living in traditional racialized enclaves or barrios in areas like the Eastside of Los Angeles. Instead, with the arrival of these "transnational communities" a more dispersed settlement trend is taking place throughout the region. "Transnational communities" are rapidly forming in communities and areas that have been the most impacted by the recent political and economic changes in Los Angeles. Of these areas, Southeast Los Angeles and South Central LA are increasingly becoming areas with a Latino majority.[10]

The transformation of neighborhoods into "transnational communities" serves as the greatest symbol of the new Latino metropolis. These communities are transformed virtually overnight with a Latino and Latin American aesthetic towards urban planning, alternative economies, and relationships with their sending communities. Homes, businesses, and public spaces are altered and transformed into "transnational" spaces for Latinos to engage with each other, purchase familiar foods, and receive services dealing with the sending of remittances to their countries or with their immigration status. Two examples share the power of these new "transnational communities." Where cyclical economic recessions have harmed other racial/ethnic groups, these new transnational communities are more inclined to survive these economic crises through the growth of a diverse entrepreneurial industry where immigrants sell services and products outside of the traditional store front or business center. Another example of their power is the estimated 10 billion dollars that are sent annually by Mexican immigrants to their families in Mexico, at times making up over half of the GNP of Mexico. This pattern of remittances holds true to other Latino groups in the region (Davis, 2001).

[10] Some areas in Southeast Los Angeles have gone from 70 percent white to 90 percent Latino in a matter of years. This has to do with the out-migration of whites to white suburban areas and the arrival of "transnational communities" to these older suburban areas in Southeast LA.

Inter-ethnic changes to the social relations between racialized ethnic Mexican groups also appear as sites of contention and inequality. Although native-born racialized ethnic groups, including Chicanos, have seen a drastic increase in educational attainment since the 1960's, with many attending college and creating a professional class of Mexican origin workers, over two-thirds of the growing foreign-born population tended to have less than a high school education. In terms of income, Chicano and native born Mexicans tended to make over 50 percent the amount of money that their foreign-born counterparts made. Much of this disparity has to do with the new low-paying labor sectors these immigrant populations work in. With low wages being synonymous with this immigrant population, over 42 percent of them were considered working poor, reflecting in a "new economy of underemployed" people living in Los Angeles (Soja and Scott, 1998). When these discrepancies in income and educational attainment within the demographic makeup of racialized ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles, the discrepancies are much larger since foreign-born Mexicans now outnumber Chicanos and native-born Mexicans 3 to 1. This is also symbolic of the placement of these new "transnational communities," as a professional class of Chicanos have relocated over the last thirty years to an Eastside suburban belt in the San Gabriel Valley, while Latino immigrants tended to be concentrated near the post-fordist economic centers of a new urban core.

Another key issue arising within the Latino metropolis is the legality of the immigrants arriving to Los Angeles. Lax immigration laws and border enforcement since the passing of the 1965 Immigration Rights Act and more recently the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, coupled with the post-fordist economy's need for cheap labor, have attracted undocumented migrants to fill the needs of this growing economy. Their "illegality" has shaped the contours of life in Los Angeles for racialized ethnic Mexicans by creating a new common enemy in the "illegal alien" throughout society, an enemy that

is perceived as responsible for the social ills and mass government spending on health care and education. Increasing policing of this population affects both immigrant and mixed citizenship status families who are criminalized by the police and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

As Los Angeles entered the 1990s, an economic recession between 1991 and 1993 greatly impacted communities of color. Although the low-wage manufacturing and service industries that hired Mexican and Latino workers were a stable source of work, albeit under difficult working conditions and without the safety-net of previous industries, this sector of the new economy was hit hard by the recession. A surplus in immigrant labor that kept arriving to Los Angeles as workers in the sweatshops and service sectors of Los Angeles were left without work caused the unemployment rate of Mexicans and Latinos to soar. By the 1992 Los Angeles rebellions, the city of Los Angeles was experiencing the widest economic and racial divide in the history of the city. An hour-glass social and economic structure had built itself with a small but powerful white elite living in the gated suburbs of the greater Los Angeles area, a shrinking middle class pushed to the edges of poverty every day, and a huge underclass of low waged and unemployed workers, the majority Latino immigrants, comprising the bottom of the hour-glass. This coupled with the dismantling of the welfare-state were the root causes of the 1992 Los Angeles rebellions and the angry response by thousands of Blacks and Latinos in areas such as South Central Los Angeles that were directly impacted by the recession.

The Global City

By the time of the 1992 Los Angeles rebellions, the city of Los Angeles and its peripheral areas had rapidly built itself as the next great "global city", the likes of New York, London, and Tokyo. Coined by social geographer, Saskia Sassen, in 1984, to

symbolize a significant shift in the economies of countries, regions, and cities across the world, the global city appears after a series of economic, political, and social crises within the previous world social order that operated much of the 20th century. For Sassen, this includes a period of thirty years beginning in the late 1960's that witnessed the de-industrialization of the urban core in major cities throughout the United States, the industrialization of Third World countries, and the internationalization of the financial industry. (Sassen, 1998) It is safe to say that the use of the term "global city" to identify Los Angeles, California gained greater momentum during the 1990s than in any other period. Yet, for the purposes of this chapter, the groundwork for the technological and informational expansion of Los Angeles as a physical, financial, and virtual "global city" was laid during the previous two decades or the 1970s and 1980s.

The globalization of the greater Los Angeles, California area emerged in a different fashion than in most "global cities." Unlike other metropolitan areas, Los Angeles is unique in that it was the only city in the United States to deindustrialize its heavy manufacturing sector during the late 1970s and early 1980s only to have a parallel shift in reindustrialization with two new forms of manufacturing industries. The first of these new industries was a flexible, decentralized, mobile, and light manufacturing industry of garments, electronics, and low-tech products. The second was the creation of a highly skilled technological and informational industry that was geographically placed outside of the urban core of Los Angeles. Coupled with a new and expanding service sector to fill the unskilled labor needs of Los Angeles' financial and media centers, the post-Keynesian neoliberal economy that emerged during the late 1970s and early 1980s symbolized the growing polarization of wealth in Los Angeles. I use the coupling of the terms "post-Keynesian" with "neoliberalism" in order to emphasize the shifting relationship between the state, capital, and labor in a neoliberal era. Of this shifting

relationship, the role of the state is one of the most important factors for the integration of neoliberal strategies and techniques.

Edward Soja (1996) suggests that this polarization of wealth in Los Angeles reflects an "hour glass class structure," where the new corporate and highly-skilled industries are relocated to upper middle-class to middle-class communities on the peripheries of the city. By contrast, the low-end low-tech industries are located in the urban core where most of the poor and working class communities of color are located. Later in the chapter, I will discuss the racialization of this spatial-class difference. For now, this particular trend developed as recently as the early 1980s, where over two-thirds of the manufacturing jobs in well-paying unionized industries like the automobile, aerospace, rubber, and electronic industries in Los Angeles were lost. Virtually overnight, white, black, and brown blue-collar workers lost their jobs and most of their pensions as companies moved to the Global South. From 1979 to 1995, over forty-five million jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector throughout the United States (Barlow, 2003: 66). In Los Angeles, which always had a high percentage of well-paying unionized jobs alongside non-unionized work, the loss of these industrial jobs did not mean the placement of traditional workers into the new flexible industries that replaced the old heavy manufacturing industries. Instead, the non-unionized low-wage jobs were mostly filled by a new population of immigrants arriving from Mexico, Latin America, and Asia, many of them undocumented and affected by the implementation of neoliberal reforms in their countries of origin. This labor force is extremely gendered as immigrant women in general are hired to work these urban "maquiladoras" or sweatshops across the city. (Chin Yoon Louie, 2001) The gendered work of women in these flexible low-skilled industries is part of a global restructuring of an international division of labor that tends to employ them as an expendable labor force.

The shift from heavy manufacturing to light and flexible forms of production also coincided with the growth of new sectors. The service sector and the Prison Industrial Sector helped replace the large number of jobs lost due to the de-industrialization of the urban core. The emergence of Los Angeles as a "global city" and a financial node in the modern capitalist world-system, created a new international division of labor where financial bankers and brokers filled the offices of the reconstructed downtown area of Los Angeles and an unskilled labor force of mostly immigrants serviced these offices and buildings as janitors and maintenance personnel. Tied to the financial sectors are other business sectors, such as the expanding entertainment and tourism industries in Los Angeles. Mexican and Latino immigrants filled many of the jobs within these industries as chambermaids, servants, and food servers.

With the flight of the heavy manufacturers also came the loss of one of Southern California's main industries, the military industrial complex. Although military spending increased throughout the 1980s in the United States, only certain high-tech aspects of the military industrial complex stayed in Los Angeles while military bases closed and the manufacturing sector left to find cheaper locations. In its place, a new industry sprouted during the 1980s to fill the loss of wages for many Angelinos.

The Prison Industrial Complex has significantly shaped the contours of everyday life in Los Angeles, Southern California, and the state of California. Ruth Wilson Gilmore discusses the rise of the Prison Industrial Complex in greater detail, in her book, Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California (2007). For Wilson Gilmore, the emergence and reproduction of the Prison Industrial Complex in California is due to various surpluses in labor, the poor and working-class population, and state land distribution. First, the loss of well-paying unionized jobs left many people unemployed. The creation of prisons and jails became an overnight industry for a

parallel shift in policing and the incarceration of poor communities of color. The construction of prisons, the maintenance of prisons, and the guarding of prison inmates became a new industry that tied private interests with those of the state. Second, with the lack of job opportunities for many people living in poor and working class communities and the dismantlement of social services offered to these vulnerable populations, crime increased as policing of inner city neighborhoods also increased. The jailing of people became a profitable industry that fulfilled the private sector's need for creating new markets and society's need to imprison and criminalize those considered economically expendable. Indeed, Gilmore argues that in the age of globalized capital, "the expansion of prison constitutes a geographical solution to socio-economic problems, politically organized by the state which is itself in the process of radical restructuring" (Wilson Gilmore, in Rodriguez 2006). The mass imprisonment and criminalization of ethnic Mexicans, Latinos, and African Americans in Los Angeles became not only profitable but a major source of anxiety and sense of hopelessness in these communities everyday life.

RACISM, POLICE BRUTALITY, AND EVERYDAY LIFE

> Los Angeles cannot permanently exist as two cities—one amazingly prosperous, the other increasingly poor in substance and in hope. (Mayor Tom Bradley during his 1989 Mayoral Inauguration)

> "'This city is sick' Durito writes to me 'it is sick of loneliness and fear. It is a great collective of solitudes. It is many cities, one for each resident. It's not about a sum of anguish (do you know of loneliness which is not anguish?), but about potency; each loneliness is multiplied by the number of lonely people which surround it. It is as though each solitude was a mirror which reflects the others, and bounces off more solitudes". (Subcomandante Marcos, Durito V, June 1995)

Mayor Tom Bradley's 1989 inaugural address cautioning Angelinos of a Los Angeles that exists as two cities, "one amazingly prosperous, the other increasingly poor

in substance and in hope," rapidly came to an explosion three years later during the 1992 Los Angeles rebellions. A simmering sense of "economic hopelessness and social alienation" (Ong and Blumenberg, 1996) boiled over during the violent events that transpired in the streets of Los Angeles for ten days in late April and early May of 1992, as Los Angeles woke up not only to two disparagingly different cities, but instead as Durito, Sub-comandante Marcos' fictional beetle, story tells, a lonely and fearful city made of "many cities, one for each resident."

How does this condition that produces two distinctly different cities as Mayor Tom Bradley describes, emerge? More importantly, how does it produce the sentiments of "loneliness and fear" that Don Durito explains in his description of the city to Sub-comandante Marcos? I asked these questions during my two years (2005-2007) of fieldwork in Los Angeles, California. The following are ethnographic vignettes expressing the "loneliness and fear" faced daily by Chicana/o urban Zapatistas during the 1980s and 1990s.

***

It is a hot July 2005 Friday evening near the Estrada housing projects in East Los Angeles, home to some of the most famous 1960's Chicano Movement murals in Los Angeles. Fernando talks to the man inside the *lonchera*, which he says serves the "best shrimp tacos in all of East LA."

"*Dame dos de asada y tres de camarron. Y una agua de horchata*."

Fernando turns back and asks, "What do you want Pablo? Pasky, what 'chu having?"

We both tell him, "the same," while we stand in front of a line of ten or so customers waiting to also put in their order. By the side of the truck an elderly Mexican woman sells baby clothes on several hangers and flowers out of a white paint bucket.

Next to her, a relatively young looking Mexican man sells bootleg DVD's and CD's, while playing some of the CD's on a battery powered stereo. The street where the *lonchera* is parked is busy with people walking and cars driving to different locations.

We had just left our bi-monthly Estación Libre meeting at Homeboy Industries in Boyle Heights, a gang prevention organization in East Los Angeles, and rushed to the location where the catering truck usually parked, hoping it hadn't left for the night. While we waited for our tacos with great anticipation, especially since these tacos were sold only on Fridays, I started asking Pasky, a gang prevention counselor and member of Estación Libre Los Angeles, about the early years when people started to work on Zapatista solidarity work since it was a topic that came up frequently during our Estación Libre meetings. Overshadowed by one of the Estrada Courts murals, he responded, "I didn't start working on EZ (EZLN) stuff till I went out there [Chiapas] in 1998. I went to events but it wasn't until we went with Estación Libre that I worked with the compas. [Zapatistas]."

"Then what was it like when the EZLN came out in 1994?" I asked.

Pasky answered, "You mean in LA? It was a war-zone. We had K-day!"

Fernando, an environmental justice activist who worked in Pacoima and a member of Estación Libre Los Angeles since 2003, smirked at Pasky's answer, presumably knowing what he is referring to with the answer of "K-day." It is often used in reference to the late April/early May 1992 Los Angeles Rebellions where for almost a week, the city of Los Angeles came to a screeching halt due to outbreaks of violence, looting, and destruction of property following the news that four Los Angeles police officers were found not-guilty for beating Black motorist Rodney King the previous year.

I asked, "So what was that like? I know in the Bay we rioted, broke windows, stole shit from the GAP and Urban Outfitters. How was it out here? Where it all started." Fernando interrupted,

> I know for myself, I remember feeling sort of anxious, all *aguitado*. I could hear the police and ambulance sirens go off outside. My older brother told me it had to do with the Rodney King thing. The beating. They let the police who did it free and I wasn't surprised. The police run free through these streets, more than the gangs did, or at least I could remember as a high schooler. Later, I saw the news and heard from friends, a lot of youngsters, that South Central was burning and that people were rioting. I wish I could have been there. Like pac (2pac) says, 'remember K-day.'

He continued,

> Everything burned. And not just in the hood. I know people that tried looting in the nice Westside neighborhoods. They were people without hope. *Sin trabajo. Sin esperanza. Tu sabes. Como ahorita*. When you have very little and you have to see an injustice, you react. Or they reacted, depends on who you ask I guess. One thing though, I have never seen white people that scared of people of color. If they only knew how much we were suffering maybe that would have changed things. *Quien sabe?*

Fernando heard our order number called and Pasky continued the conversation by giving his take on the events that transpired in May 1992:

> You have to put things into perspective out here in the streets. Things were worse back then. I was deep into gangs and had I not gone to Northridge for school, who knows what would have happened. We didn't have jobs, our schools were all fucked up. Gangs were the only thing out there for many of us.

Pasky's comments resonated with the work he did with Homeboy Industries, which included helping ex-gang members find work and preventing youth from entering the gang life. He was an ex-gang member of one of the most notorious East LA gangs during his teenage years, but witnessing several of his friends die to gang violence turned his life around. He eventually attended Cal State Northridge in 1993. During his years at Cal State Northridge, he began working with various individuals who worked on building

solidarity with the Zapatista communities. This lead to his involvement with Estación Libre, a collective made up of "people of color"[11] activists and community organizers from the United States who worked in Chiapas planning peace delegations and other solidarity efforts.

I made the comment, "But from my understanding, the riots never came out here to East Los Angeles."

"Yeah, it was mostly in South Central but we all felt the beatings," Pasky ended his sentence while biting into his *tacos de camaron*.

Pasky's comment counters most accounts of the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion which placed most of the emphasis on the impact zone of South Central Los Angeles and in particular Black South Central. Instead, Pasky referenced the fact that the 1992 rebellions reverberated across Los Angeles, to Chicano/Mexicano East Los Angeles, and as I stated to Pasky and Fernando, to other places outside of Southern California.

Over the course of two years (2005-2007) I had several formal and informal conversations about the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellions. It became a part of my list of questions during formal interviews with informants and almost always a source of conversation during regular meetings at the Eastside Café Echospace, or with the Autonomous Peoples Collective, and at Estación Libre gatherings. Each personal testimony delivered a different interpretation of the rebellions and each added a different element in my understanding of what led to the embracing of the EZLN uprising in 1994. I had a similar conversation with Quetzal Flores, a well-known musician and founder of the Chicana/o musical group, Quetzal. Quetzal mentioned during an informal conversation with various other Zapatista-inspired musicians and community organizers

[11] As defined in my Introduction, the term "people of color" is used in this dissertation to represent non-white racialized groups in the United States. These include but are not limited to traditionally racialized groups such as ethnic Mexicans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Blacks, and First Nation Native Americans.

that the connection between Chicanos and the Zapatistas initially was closely tied to the common experiences of economic exploitation, police/military occupation and violence, and cultural assimilation. Quetzal exclaimed,

> The 1992 rebellions were our first taste of activism and mobilization. Chicano and black youth were criminalized by the media, the police, and politicians. Most of the opportunities afforded to youth of color were cut during the Reagan years and many of us were left out in the cold, trying to find guidance. The music scene was very mainstream and didn't reflect the lives of those who lived in the neighborhood. Then came Proposition 187 in 1994 that tried to cut social services for undocumented families, and things started to explode. Our communities didn't look like the way they were being portrayed by the media. They were changing. In fact, if you look at many of the people that rioted, they were Brown not just Black.

From Quetzal's words one could find a sliver of what the political economy of race in Los Angeles looked like right before the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellions. The lack of job opportunities for youth of color represented the massive cuts to urban social services during the Ronald Reagan and George Bush presidencies of the 1980s and early 1990s. It also frames the emergence of what Mike Davis calls, the carceral city (1990) where youth of color are the prime suspects and targets of police arrests, brutality, and violence. His final comments on Proposition 187 and the racial/ethnic makeup of the rioters during the rebellions, suggests that youth of color were not the only population to feel the effects of a powerful police force in barrios and ghettos throughout Los Angeles. Mexican and Latino immigrants, many of them undocumented, constituted the fastest growing population during the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion and were perceived as a real threat to the racial/social order of Los Angeles.

Pasky, Fernando, and Quetzal's narratives highlight the signs of a changing social and economic landscape and underscore the larger socioeconomic conditions that have

shaped the contours of life for ethnic Mexican, Latino, and other communities of color throughout Los Angeles, California since the early 1990s.

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During my time working with the Eastside Café and the Autonomous Peoples Collective, I became close friends with Laura P. who had lived in South Central most of her life, or as she called it, "South Central Jalisco," a play on words that represented the large population of Mexican Jalisienses in South Central Los Angeles. This transnational identification with "place" is a common association by immigrants who arrive to Los Angeles. Deterritorialized by state terror tactics and structural economic adjustments in their countries of origin, many immigrant communities from the Global South reterritorialize cultural traditions and customs within the urban landscapes of the Global North, carving out a transnational space to navigate and maneuver through the racial and economic regimes of the global city.

In the case of Laura, her identity was firmly grounded in an in-between space of being Mexicana and Chicana, or as the popular saying goes, "*ni de aquí ni de alla*" (being from neither here nor there). This interstitial space, articulated by Chicana feminists as a third space, a borderlands, is a place of transition, transformation, violent negotiation and navigation, but also deeply rooted in history (Anzaldúa, 1986; Perez, 1999; Sandoval, 2001).

Laura was a member of the Eastside Café's coordinating committee at the time and one of the original participants in the 1997 Zapatista/Chicano Encuentro in Oventic Chiapas, an event that many in Los Angeles equate with the genesis of Zapatista-inspired work in LA. She was also the co-founder of El Puente Hacia La Esperanza, a collective of independent artisans and artists who sold anti-sweatshop goods at local events. Their largest event, the annual anti-mall, brought together politically conscious artisans and

musicians, promoted healthy living, and responsible shopping. Most anti-malls also sold artisanry from women's collectives in Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico, and raised funds for other solidarity efforts, like the movement to free political prisoners jailed after the Atenco rebellion in Mexico or in support of the APPO (Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca) in Oaxaca.

One day during a visit to the South Central Farm, a 14-acre urban farm in South Central Los Angeles, Laura began to tell me a story about growing up in South Central Los Angeles during the time of the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellions. The following is a brief vignette of her experiences.

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Laura helps her father unchain the tires of the car before going to school. The morning is still cool but the rising sun warms her face from the cold air. She is returning back to school after days of suspended instruction due to the "state of emergency" called in the wake of the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellions. She remembers:

> Living in South Central during those times, we felt a lot of fear. Most of the houses in my neighborhood had steel bars on their windows and doors. There were so many burglaries. People breaking into your home. My father even had to chain the tires of the car. There wasn't that much for us in South Central. No jobs. No place to play. No hope.

Laura's neighborhood was a rapidly changing space where African American families were becoming the racial minority in the area. Latin American and Mexican immigrants, many of them undocumented, arrived to the area in the 1980s to work in the flexible low-paying and non-unionized factories and industries of Los Angeles. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act that was supposed to curtail "illegal immigration" into the country by sanctioning and fining businesses hiring undocumented workers and by offering amnesty to well over one million undocumented migrants

already in the United States, actually precipitated the arrival of millions more undocumented migrants. African American families on the other hand struggled to enter any of the new racially polarized service sectors. Those African American families that were able to leave South Central after the de-industrialization of the urban core during the 1970s and early 1980s, moved to re-established African American suburban cities to the east. Those that were left behind faced the rapid decay of their streets as gangs, drugs, and violence increased across the inner city ghettos of Los Angeles.

Laura recalled the tensions that emerged during this difficult time. "I went to school with Mexicans and Blacks. We got along pretty good. But when things got difficult and there were no jobs, that creates tensions. A lot of kids feel the tensions of their parents and we would come to school and wonder why our friends were not there. We would find out that they had gotten shot or they had moved because their parents were arrested."

The everyday violence faced by youth of color was at times subtle. A missed day of school or a bruise on the arm or hearing a round of gunfire from your bedroom window all became forms of violence that affected youth and their ability to play outside or learn at school. On the other hand, violence often showed its face in not so subtle ways. This included seeing people get shot due to gang retaliation, participating in fights, witnessing everyday forms of domestic violence between family members or neighbors, and facing police harassment or abuse for being perceived as a gang member or drug dealer. As a teenager, Laura found a way to maneuver through these subtle and not so subtle forms of violence. Her strong family network and outside mentorship provided opportunities many of her friends did not have growing up. Although gang life was not a part of her experience, she knew plenty of friends who were recruited and who were either incarcerated or murdered due to their gang affiliation. This form of violence,

however, did not compare to the violence she experienced as a result of the massive police presence in her neighborhood.

> One of the first things we started organizing against during those times was against the police harassment and violence. I understood the riots as a response to the shit the police did to us daily. They would stop us on our way and coming from school or from the swap meet and ask us to show them our tattoos and our gang names. They had this book they would put our names on, kinda like the book the Mexican government had in Chiapas to put *extranjeros'* names in. That kind of shit. They would arrest people and plant evidence and they intimidated you all the time by flashing their lights at night. Then they wonder why people rioted.

Police violence was a common thread in many of my interviews with artists and activists during my time in Los Angeles. It was a shared experience that I could talk to them freely about since I had faced similar forms of police harassment and abuse growing up in Richmond and Berkeley, California. The following section deals with another common link among Chicana/o youth, namely their experience within the educational system of Los Angeles.

EDUCATION AND IDENTITY

For decades, over 95 percent of the students attending Garfield High School in East Los Angeles have been of Mexican origin. Even with the introduction of other Latin American groups to the area, the overwhelming majority of the students have been ethnic Mexicans. In the late 1960's, the high school was the site of mass student organizing resulting in large scale walkouts of most of the East Los Angeles high schools in the vicinity. Invigorated by a broader cultural affirmation movement, students in 1968 took to the streets to protest years of educational discrimination for this ethnic student population. Calling themselves Chicanos, a cultural identity that broke radically from the previous generation's adoption of a Mexican-American identity, the students of Garfield

High School were successful in gaining local and national attention to the forms of structural discrimination facing racial minorities in the schools.

Two decades after the 1968 "blowouts" at Garfield High School and with many of the structures of discrimination still in place, the use of the term Chicano seems almost absent from the student vernacular. The more popular term, "Hispanic" as an ethnic identity, has replaced the once radical use of a Chicano identity. Only several cultural murals and student groups, progressive teachers, and the outside ethnic Mexican community stand in the way of Garfield resembling its pre-1968 façade. Over the years, a small percentage of students at Garfield have navigated the minefields of the educational system in Los Angeles and graduated from the high school. An even smaller percentage of those students who graduate Garfield will end up attending a 4-year university. For the majority of the students, the reality is a harsh one. Over 50 percent of them will not finish high school and will more likely enter the growing post-industrial labor force of Los Angeles. Young Chicanas will either become mothers at a very early age or enter this new low-wage and deskilled labor force. Young Chicano men will either be recruited into the many neighborhood gangs in East Los Angeles, enlist in the U.S. armed forces, or enter the prison system for petty offenses and crimes.

Advanced placement classes are now offered at Garfield but it is clear that with such a high push-out rate these college prep courses are designed for the few that survive and are deemed the "good" students who come to "learn." Although some advancement has been made in terms of hiring ethnic Mexican teachers to teach at Garfield, the great majority of the teachers continue to be white and not from the barrios of East Los Angeles.

For young women and men who attend Garfield, being deemed a "good student," is always in relation to the majority of the student population that is labeled "bad

students." That is to say, one's placement in the school's pyramid is linked to how well a student conforms to the social norms of how well a "good student" performs academically. For many students, the failure to question these unwritten rules and standards, reflect a particular relationship with their communities which are mostly ethnic Mexican and Latino. Claiming an ethnic Mexican identity becomes contrary to what the school deems socially acceptable. Indeed, Garfield High School, like most of the high schools in East Los Angeles, had succeeded in producing students detached from the outside community of East Los Angeles.

From these fissures of loss and despair, the resiliency of the 1968 "blowouts" finds itself in the lives of many students at Garfield High School. Eddie, a native of East Los Angeles, attended Garfield High during the late 1980s and early 1990s. His experiences were similar to the experiences of many students who are deemed "good students." He took college prep courses in Math, Science, Social Science, and English. His strong "B" average reflected his "good" position in the school. Eddie, like many of his classmates, preferred to identify himself as Hispanic instead of Chicano. He had heard the use of the term Chicano everyday growing up in East LA but for him it did not have the political meaning that others attributed to the term. He used both, Hispanic and Chicano, interchangeably, but preferred Hispanic for its broader acceptance. Eddie's use of Hispanic did not make him somehow different than his classmates who preferred a Chicano identity because of its implied politics. He had just not heard it used throughout his life in any political way a result of the decline of the Chicano Movimiento and the mainstreaming of the government issued "Hispanic" label. Taking full advantage of the opportunities offered to "good students," Eddie took classes in Political Science and History where some of his more progressive teachers taught him to question things. Eddie remembers, "They began to instill in me that I should question things, that I had to

speak up, that I had to force my opinion or that I had to stand for something or that I had to remember doing that as a senior." Not all his classes taught him to think critically and to speak up. Eddie remembers a particular incident with his English teacher and the influence it had on his politicization as a teenager:

> I had an English teacher who taught me how to write, but very racist in her ways. Kind of embedded racism, she didn't realize it. At one point, we had this one guy who wanted or started a Danza group. They didn't really understand that at the time, that part of our culture. He actually wanted to start a Nahuatl class, and he had a group of students who were going to do a presentation to the school. So we had to go to the presentation and for some reason part of the presentation we had to do the pledge of allegiance. And I remember a guy from my class who would get mad when people would use the word Hispanic instead of Chicano. It was the first time I heard the word Chicano. Not the first time but the first time I heard it as a statement. There is a difference. I used to use it very loosely, Chicano and Hispanic, the same thing but different word. And I remember this one guy, his name was Carlos, and he came up in class and said, "Naw, I'm Chicano" and just kinda of thinking that was extreme at the time. And him telling me about the war back then, the Gulf War, and telling me about what was going on with the hunger strike. The '92 rebellion, and Rock the Vote, trying to get young Raza to vote, all these things were taking place. So at this school presentation, we had to do the pledge of allegiance, and I had read somewhere in my political science class about Stockley Carmichael and not pledging the flag in his life, and I remember Carlos, looking at him, " Naw dude, I'm not going to pledge this flag!" I'm not sure what was the reason why he didn't wanna do it, and I remember looking at the teacher looking at him. And he was like, "Get up, pledge the flag!" and Carlos was like, "I don't have to." And Carlos, had worse of a temper than me, and he would talk back. He didn't want to cuss but that was his way of talking. So he started screaming and they sent him to the office.
>
> The teacher, she looked at me and said, "Eddie why aren't you saluting the flag?" and I decided to say, "It's my right not to, my right not to." And she said, you know, almost treating me as a different Mexican, because I was an A student, and this was honors English, she was like, "Eddie, um, we are going to have to talk about this." She was like, "Why don't you go back to the office, you're not in trouble but go back to the office." And she was like making excuses for me. And finally I went back to the office, the whole thing was over, and got summoned back to the class by the teacher, and class was over, and we had to go to lunch, and I remember um, her saying, "just kinda stop this silliness." And I was like, "I'm serious." And she said, "Well, next time I'll suspend you." And she used

her authority and I said, "Do what you have to do but I got my right." And then she got frustrated and said, "You know what, on second thought, go back to the office." So I said okay. And the principal, at the time, Ms. Tostado, looked at my record, and I was like "ok", honor student, AP student, he is in sports, in clubs, what is this kid in trouble for? And I was like a 'B' average student. And she was like "What's up with this kid?" That day, we had to turn in our assignment, it was a big part of our grade, and I was already a senior and it was a big deal. And I remember her not accepting my assignment, and giving me a lower grade. And I remember thinking but why though. So I remember fighting that and going back to the principal and saying, "She doesn't want to take my assignment because she sent me to the office, but the reason I went to the office is because I didn't want to salute the flag. As the principal you need to stand for my rights." And she was like, "Eddie why are you doing this?" Ms. Tostado was like "You're an AP student." And what it was like was, if you were not an AP student, you didn't matter to her. And Garfield is still like that to this day. It is very divided. But I started as an ESL, remedial English as a frosh and sophomore. But I don't know how I ended up in AP three years later. She told the teacher that she should accept my assignment and I still have my yearbook. In my yearbook, that teacher, now retired, wrote in there. She said, "The writer in you was developed when you began to lose your Spanish." In those words, and I remember, she would say, "You have exceptional potential, you think twice [as fast] than anyone." She started telling me that. "And you need to develop these gifts," but I asked, "What was the price?"

Eddie's long narrative about failing to salute the American flag stood as one of many stepping-stones in his own political trajectory. His sentiments, instead of reflecting an isolated instance of resistance, projected a different picture. During the early 1990s, Chicano youth throughout Los Angeles and California were also beginning to question the business-as-usual racist educational systems that were only preparing them for work in the garment factories and low-paying service jobs, pushing them into the growing prison systems, and recruitment into the military.

LONELINESS AND HOPELESSNESS IN THE GLOBAL CITY

Ethnographic writing on the contemporary "global city" captures the centralization of deterritorialized cultural production by diasporic populations making "place" in the urban canvas of megacities throughout the globe. It involves both a

combination of thick detailed description of "place" (Geertz, 1977) and a mirror to the transnational ethnographic imaginary (Marcus, 1995; Appadurai, 2000) that makes "place" such a desirable unit of investigation for anthropologists studying transnationalism and urbanism, to define, map, and theorize. The emergence of Los Angeles as one of the most important "global cities" in the modern global capitalist economy is marred with one of the most violent battles over "place-making." Its attraction over the last quarter of a century, as a major financial metropole, as a capital for a global entertainment industry, its impressive history of economic growth, and its geographical position as a major destination for millions of immigrants and refugees from throughout the global South, has shaped this uneven, at times un-inhabitable, canvas in unique and challenging ways. But what of the violent trauma associated with the dispossession and de-territoriality created by globalization? What effects has it had on these new "transnational communities" inhabiting the interstitial spaces (Peña, 2006) of the "global city"? The following ethnographic vignettes from my first three months of fieldwork in El Sereno, California speak to these questions.

Loneliness in the Streets

Contrary to my camaradas' wishes, I am constantly taking long walks around my neighborhood in El Sereno. Since most of the events at the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE do not start till the evening, I am free to explore Los Angeles and its many neighborhoods. Pasky, an old friend, who I've had the opportunity to work with on several people of color delegations to Chiapas, Mexico, mentioned which neighborhoods I should be careful walking through. He is a local gang counselor at a gang prevention organization in Boyle Heights and his knowledge of East Los Angeles is second to none.

I told him that I didn't come from a well-to-do neighborhood, and that if East Los Angeles was anything like the streets of Richmond California, then I would be just fine.

One of my favorite places to walk is by a small charter school, a few blocks off of Huntington Drive and Eastern called la Academia Semillas del Pueblo. Chicana and Chicano activists and teachers who sought to promote cultural difference and pride through academic excellence built the school years ago. Mixpe, a friend of mine who sublet her apartment to me while she, along with her partner Olmeca, coordinated the daily activities of the Orange House, Estación Libre's headquarters in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, used to work at Semillas. Before she left, she mentioned that I should go and check out the unique daily activities at the charter school. I was amazed to find out that the school offers not only a bi-lingual education in English and Spanish, but also teaches their K-6 students lessons in Chinese Mandarin and Mexican Nahuatl as an integral part of the daily curriculum. Made up of mostly Mexican, Latino, Asian, and Haitian students, the school is unprecedented in its approach towards a true "multicultural" curriculum.

On this occasion I was walking towards the school when I arrived at an alleyway I usually took to arrive behind the school. Beginning on Eastern Avenue and Huntington Drive, I chose to walk by the alleyway because of a unique mural that was located there. I turned onto Eastern headed towards Semillas only to see a small graffiti image of Cantiflas, the famous Mexican caricature and movie star. The image of Cantiflas, famous Mexican film character, hidden along the wall of the Mazatlan Theatre, an old, abandoned movie theater just off of Eastern and Huntington Drive, next to a mariscos Mexican restaurant and a fast food Chinese restaurant, stood out of place among the other graffiti on the wall.

In Los Angeles, as in most urban areas, graffiti writing is a common phenomenon symbolic of an inner city aesthetic. Aside from the usual "tags" of local neighborhood gangs or their adversaries, graffiti murals have historically been depicted as part of the growing criminal element in urban areas across the country. Throughout society there is a growing sentiment that the lack of respect towards private property ownership by mostly youth of color "graf writers," should be punished harshly. This growing sentiment criminalizes many youth of color who express themselves through this artistic expression to the point where they must practice the art of graffiti writing at night and in a clandestine fashion.

Recently this form of art has been mainstreamed to the art galleries of various "artsy" neighborhoods in Los Angeles. Selling a broad canvas of live graffiti art can bring a graffiti artist an income he or she might not receive otherwise. Yet, in Los Angeles, where graffiti writing and murals have made tremendous strides over the last twenty years, there still exists a stigma from the different art scenes on the cultural value of graffiti writing.

In this case, a very well known "graf" artist, with the tag, Nuke, beautifully sprayed the image of Cantiflas, not much taller than 5 feet from the ground, with the slogan, "Welcome 2 da Barrio." I had heard of Nuke, a Chicano graffiti artist, because he had helped paint several murals in Chiapas in the late 90s, the most well known on the Zapatista health clinic in the caracol (cultural center) of Oventic. He worked out of the East Los Angeles art space, Self-Help Graphics. His graffiti murals are infamous in Los Angeles for having not only a unique aesthetic style but also a social message. The Cantinflas mural, insignificant to many who walked by it and a nostalgic reminder to those who grew up laughing to his fast talking quick witted humor, always caught my eye for its many meanings.

Cantinflas, played by the famous Mexican performer and actor, Mario Moreno, represented in Mexican society the vagabond/tramp character that Charlie Chaplin represented to those in the United States. But unlike Chaplin, Cantinflas portrayed the Mexican *pelon* of the 20s, 30s, and 40s, who "border crossed" racial/ethnic, class, and societal barriers during a tumultuous time in Mexican history. Soon after the end of the Mexican revolution, hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and specifically Indians from the ravaged rural areas of Mexico moved to the sprawling metropolis of Mexico City to walk the streets of a growing industrial giant. Developing their own style of dress and talk and seen as a societal problem, the *pelon* character depicted by Moreno in his plays and movies represented more than a satire of Mexican modernity, it symbolized the changing landscape of Mexico's urban and rural populations that also ended up traveling North to the U.S. throughout the century.

I passed by the old theatre on the corner of Eastern and Huntington Drive and noticed that this contemporary image of Cantinflas had been painted over in white. I wondered for a while if the building had finally been bought to make room for some new business along this busy corridor in El Sereno. Other graffiti along the wall was also whitewashed out. Instead of walking towards Semillas, as I intended on doing, I headed to the Eastside Café for a meeting and brought my curiosity to those in attendance. Beto, one of the co-founders of the Eastside café and a long time Chicano activist/organizer in Los Angeles, also mentioned that he had noticed the Cantinflas piece missing. We started to talk about who may have been responsible for painting over this mural that had been on the outside wall of the old theatre for years. Later that day after asking several people from the community, we found out that it was removed by the city in their attempt to wash away graffiti from buildings throughout the city. We also found out that the Cantinflas mural was one of many pieces discussed for removal by the new culture and

arts committee created by the mayor of Los Angeles, Antonio Villaraigosa. The committee was responsible for renovating various murals and creating a broad sense of Angelino culture that included various famous murals in the Eastside that were painted during the peak of the Chicano power movement in the 1960's and 1970s. These murals, like the famous 1960's Chicano Movement murals alongside the Estrada courts in East LA, were seen as more culturally valuable than a small graffiti mural of Cantinflas.

After careful reflection, it seemed to me that the fact that the removal of the Cantinflas mural did not cause a major uproar in the community – because, after all, it was graffiti -- symbolized the end of a major shift in Chicano politics. Chicanos debate endlessly, when the promise of political and cultural self-determination, within the Chicano movement had ended; when the fight for self-identification and cultural survival was replaced by the language of multiculturalism and corporate individualism. That day arrived, figuratively speaking, when Cantinflas no longer "border crossed." The Chicano murals that were targeted for renovation were juxtaposed to the graffiti murals the city saw as a growing symbol of the criminal element associated with graffiti, choosing to acknowledge one form of community art over the other.

The irony lies in the erasure of Cantinflas in his graffiti form and in all his *pelon* grandeur. During a time of continued migration from Mexico and Latin America, a parallel response of great xenophobia, constant attacks on communities of color, a growing trend in gentrification throughout the Greater Eastside, and a continued police presence, the rejuvenation of the Chicano movements artistic expression of *Chicanidad* and Mexicaness as part of the Los Angeles cultural landscape erased the growing reality of today's Mexican LA. The Cantinflas character of the persistent *pelon* in Mexico, and I would say in the US, had been washed away. It left me wondering for a while, "what

other aspects of Chicana/o and Mexican Los Angeles will be whitewashed away and what, if any, response will take shape?"

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Gerardo waits for me to grab the tacos from the counter and sit down on the yellow benches inside a local taqueria in El Sereno. I bring him some extra napkins and a straw for his agua de Jamaica. We start to eat our tacos *de pollo asado* and *al pastor* since we have only an hour before our Autonomous Peoples Collective meeting at the Eastside Café. I take out my recorder and notebook and mention to him that today I just want to ask him about his work with homeless people. I start to share the story of the Cantinflas graffiti that was whitewashed just blocks from the taco shop. He thinks for a moment after I finish telling the story and gets right into the conversation:

> I think what got me working with homeless people, *tú sabes* people living in the streets or in temporary housing, is that when I was growing up, I was constantly moving. *No tenía casa*. When my mother passed away I went to live with my extended family in Mexico and I went back and forth from Mexico for many years. One day, I was taking the bus from the border to Los Angeles and as I arrived to LA I saw all the people who live in the street, you know Skid row. It reminded me *todo lo que yo personalmente vivía cada día*. I too was homeless in a sense. *Yo tambien no tenia techo y hogar*. Is that similar to the Cantinflas mural? It kinda is, *qué no*?

Gerardo lived from place to place for most of his life. Traveling from Colima, Mexico to the United States throughout his childhood, the sense of a home was foreign to him. This sense of homelessness spurred his work during college with homeless populations in the Bay Area and in Los Angeles. After participating in the creation of several important organizations that promoted homeless peoples rights, he entered the field of social welfare and services in order to directly work with a population he felt a tremendous connection with.

Gerardo: See many times, *pensamos* que homeless people are living in the streets, but what we don't realize *es que la mayoría de la gente viven con familia o en apartamentos con otra gente*. These people are also homeless, *sin casa*, *tú sabes*. And I started to see that *mucha de la gente que* I would service, they would be *inmigrantes que no tenian casa*, they would live in homes with two or three other families. We never think of that as homelessness, because we have an image of people who are on drugs, or are mentally ill and living in the street. *Pero* there are a lot of *familias* that live without a sense of home. And that is what I started trying to work on, to let people know that homelessness is much larger than what they thought it was.

Pablo: And what do you see as the causes of this? In a capitalist society it seems there have always been homeless people. People that are left out. Like Cantinflas, people who don't fit in, who are expendable.

Gerardo: *Sí*, I'm glad you mention that because that is what we often neglect when we talk, *cuando hablamos de la gente que vive en la calle*. And if we look at the history of Los Angeles, we see that over the last *como yo dire*, twenty years or so, the number of homeless people or the number of people that ask for services has grown into the millions. This is a number that the politicians don't want us to know about. Working in Skid Row, you see all the time, politicians, no todos de Los Angeles, but all kinds of them come and visit Skid row and they bring the media and they give out food and then give this press conference on what we need to do to help. *Pero cuando regresan a sus oficinas*, they write laws and ordinances that make it legal to arrest homeless people for being next to a cash machine or a restaurant. Businesses and politicians don't want them anywhere near their buildings. And so they say one thing *pero hacen lo opuesto*.

Jennifer Wolch (1996) writing on the proliferation of homelessness in Los Angeles, California suggests the root causes of people living in the streets stems from the economic, political, and social changes of the 1980s and early 1990s. During these two decades the number of people living in the streets in Los Angeles grew to an estimated 200,000 people during any given year.[12] For Wolch, the "deindustrialization, reindustrialization, public sector contraction, and service sector expansion" of the region placed the city in a very vulnerable position where economically, the loss of jobs due to

[12] This number has grown significantly since the early 1990s. Gerardo mentioned that the broadening definition of what it means to be homeless has expanded the numbers to well over 1,000,000 who are without a home. This of course includes people who live on the streets, in shelters or low income housing, and families that live in homes with other families.

the capital flight of traditional industries and the end of decades of post-WWII military spending caused an increase in unemployment and people dependent on the state for social services. Paralleling the economic woes of the 1980s and 1990s, the effects of previous tax revolts in the state, the movement to end and privatize the "welfare state," and the lack of affordable housing resulted in a funneling of thousands of people to fight for the few social services that were provided by the state and in most cases led to families becoming homeless.

Gerardo reminded me during our conversation that part of what happened during this era was not only the massive number of people that became homeless but that these people were quickly criminalized and seen as a social nuisance to communities that wanted to keep their neighborhoods clean and sterile. Wolch contends that the pro-business efforts by politicians, real estate developers, and businessmen to transform the downtown area of Los Angeles into a global financial and commercial center depended on a widespread cleansing of the downtown area not only of a growing homeless population but also a growing immigrant homeless population that was arriving daily by the thousands. Wolch states:

> In addition to zoning codes making the sitting of homeless facilities difficult, many cities had municipal codes restricting access to public parks during the nights, banning loitering and soliciting, and prohibiting trespassing on private property.

City ordinances and zoning codes that made homelessness a crime affected not only people living in the streets but those that worked and lived throughout the urban inner city. Parks, recreational areas, benches, pay phones, and city streets became inaccessible not only to homeless people but also to families and individuals who used them daily. In terms of policing, Wolch discusses how a "small number of cities routinely conducted law enforcement 'sweeps' to remove homeless people from public

sidewalks and other spaces" (415). Gerardo spoke more on these sweeps in greater detail:

> Most of the time what the police does is wait for places like skid row to get comfortable. For *familias* and persons to get their cardboard houses set up before they come at night and tear them down. *Y como* most of the shelters close or are full early, *la mayoría de la gente* are left out in the street. Now you see signs, I'm not sure if you have seen them, but they have signs *que dicen*, "no loitering or sleeping". *No los dejan con dignidad*. *Y ahora vemos mas imigrantes y sus familias* living on the street. *Sin papeles*. And I try to help them *pero son muchos* and there is so much bureaucratic paperwork we have to do to just offer them a bed. It has become a real bad situation.

I checked my watch and saw that our time had run out. As we left the taqueria, Gerardo jokingly mentioned to me, "*Sabes qué Pablo, de una manera o otra, todos somos Cantinflas*."

Invisible City

In 1985, at the age of five, Marisol, a school teacher in South Central Los Angeles and a 2003 delegate to Chiapas with the "people of color" collective, *Estación Libre*, moved with her family from a small ranch town on the outskirts of Guadalajara, Jalisco to the South Los Angeles community of South Gate. From South Gate, her family moved three more times in six years, until they eventually ended up in Lynnwood, near the Compton border. Upon arriving to Los Angeles, her mother found work as a seamstress in one of the factories near downtown. Marisol remembers her mother waking up early in the morning to catch the bus from Lynnwood to downtown, a commute that took several hours on a good day. Her father, who for most of his life had worked the land with Marisol's abuelito, found work as a butcher in one of the first *carnecerías* in the Lynnwood/Compton area. After ten years working in the butcher shop, he opened his own shop closer to his home. Historically, this area of Lynnwood was predominantly African American families who owned homes and worked in the heavy machinery

industries lining the South Central Los Angeles industrial corridors. During the 1980s, these African American families would soon leave such working class areas as Lynnwood and Compton because of the rapid de-industrialization of the urban core, where their union jobs were outsourced to cheaper locations across the globe.

Marisol recalls, "My dad brought us to LA when I was five, me and my sisters. He came to work and send money back to my grandfather and grandmother who stayed to work their piece of land…They were part of an *ejiditario* for like almost fifty years or something. Like my grandpa's father before him had the land. My dad back then always used to say that we would return, but now look, it's been over twenty years." Her father would always talk amongst her extended family of uncles, aunts, and cousins, his displeasure in leaving his town. She remembers such rants: "*Pinche gobierno malo, solo asisten a los ricos*!" His anger stemmed from a period in Mexico where the country underwent an entire overhaul of its economic system, introducing it to the neoliberalization of its economy.

In 1982, under then President Miguel de la Madrid, the Mexican economy went through a severe economic crisis and devaluation of its monetary system. Virtually overnight, unemployment and inflation rates jumped to unprecedented highs. As a result, the Mexican government was forced to ask for a series of loans from banks around the world and to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In return, these banks demanded their own series of structural adjustments and removal of trade barriers for foreign investment. This process had even harsher consequences for millions of Mexicans throughout the country. For those who made their living farming, the economic crisis was the beginning of the end for their way of life. Thousands of farmers and their families, facing high inflation rates and low prices for their products, were forced to leave their lands and make the trip north to the United States where they competed in a low-

wage and low-skilled service and manufacturing industry in cities like Los Angeles. The effects of neoliberal policy on the lives of rural Mexican farmers forced her grandparents to make the trip to the United States in 1995. There they stayed with her parents never to return to their land again as her grandfather passed in the late 1990s and her grandmother stayed with her parents from that point on.

When asked about her memories of that piece of land owned by her family, Marisol is mixed with emotions. Her face shined when she remembered running as a child around her grandfather's several acres of land. She remembered playing with farm animals and the smell of corn husks burned after the cobs were de-husked. Her face took on a different expression when she remembered the loss of that piece of land. She softly shares, "It's the place I was born. The place where I was the most happy. Where my family was happy. That's what hurts the most."

For Marisol, the economic conditions of Mexico during the 1980s forced her parents to move from their land in Jalisco to Los Angeles with her grandparents eventually facing the same fate. Once they settled in Los Angeles, Marisol's family made place in the growing racialized ethnic Mexican and Latino communities of Lynnwood and South LA, opening their own business after years working in the factories of the new economies of the urban core and never forgetting the memory of their small plot of land in Mexico.

SUMMARY

It is understandable that of the Chicana/o activists, artists, musicians, and community organizers that I worked with and interviewed during my time in Los Angeles, California, a large majority do not speak often of their experiences prior to the 1994 Zapatista uprising or that their response is a shared feeling of "loneliness." Their

stories and memories are hard for them to express because of this experience of feeling "alone", having to face many forms of violence and abuse on a daily basis with no answer or guidance in sight. From the memories of racism and police violence in their neighborhoods to their relationship to the educational system to the isolating feeling of the global city, Chicana/o youth in Los Angeles just prior to 1994 faced insurmountable conditions in their lives. Looking at the age composition of my interviewees and those that I worked with politically during my ethnographic fieldwork, the majority of them were relatively young, in their pre-teens and politically inexperienced. Those that had organizing experience spoke of the difficult time they had mobilizing people to act against the neo-conservative and economic austerity policies of the Reagan 1980s. They also spoke of a betrayal; a betrayal by local and citywide politicians on an increasingly young and immigrant population that were reshaping the social and cultural contours of life in barrios and ghettos in Los Angeles. The use of oral histories and ethnography offers us a glimpse at not only the material and structural conditions faced by Chicana/o youth in Los Angeles during the 1980's but also a way to start building a foundation to understand why the 1994 Zapatista rebellion resonated so greatly with this marginalized urban population. In this case, oral histories and ethnographic writing speak to the use of the terms "loneliness and despair" as indicators of a growing racial and economic alienation of Chicana/o youth and their collective response to these forms of alienation. While most literature on the global city focuses on the political economy of a metropolis like Los Angeles, it oftentimes leaves out and neglects the stories of those who are most greatly impacted by the economic policies prevalent during this first stage of the global city's development. Such an absence fails to tie the political, economic, and social changes occurring during the 1980's in Los Angeles to the lives of those who this dissertation speaks of and through. The following chapter will attempt at bridging these

experiences faced by Chicana/o urban Zapatistas in the 1980's to their political and cultural response during the early 1990s. It will discuss the political and cultural resonance of Zapatismo on the lives of Chicana/o activists, artists, musicians, and community organizers in Los Angeles, California as a response to the "loneliness and despair" felt by thousands of youth during the prior decade.

CHAPTER 3

Chicana/o Solidarity and the Zapatistas

The emergence of Los Angeles as the next great "global city," on par with Tokyo, London, and New York during the early 1990s reflects its entrance into the global economy as a financial and informational node in a modern capitalist world system (Grosfoguel, 2002; Sassen, 2001; Sassen, 1998). With neoliberal structural adjustment policies during the 1980s causing the rural and urban populations of underdeveloped countries to migrate north, especially those in Latin America and Asia, the city of Angels became the destination point for millions of people looking for work and opportunity. Ironically, the transformation of the greater Los Angeles area into a "Latino Metropolis," (Rocco, 1996; Valle and Torres, 1998; Davis, 2000) a metropolis with a majority racialized ethnic Mexican and Latino population, did not assure thousands of Chicana/o, Mexicana/o, and Latina/o youth living in the "transnational barrios" of the fragmented city greater life chances and opportunities. Instead, it paralleled massive government cuts in education, housing, health care, and other public services that impacted youth in particular. It also spurred a fierce xenophobic and racist response to the changing racial/ethnic makeup of the city and state of California through the passing of state voter initiatives on undocumented migration, bilingual education, affirmative action policies, and policing measures.[13] As Valle and Torres (1998) argue, "The effect of all this is to render the population that 'occupies' Central Los Angeles invisible politically and

[13] Valle and Torres mention the passing of Proposition 187 in 1994 that denies basic services and education to undocumented people in California, Proposition 184 in that same year that targeted repeated offenders of crime through the "three strikes you are out" law, Proposition 209 in 1996 which ended racial preferences and affirmative action policies in California, and Proposition 227 which targeted bilingual education. The turn of the millennium brought forth a series of other measures that targeted youth of color in particular.

economically, to be policed but not seen or heard (from), a population beyond the boundaries of the political imagination save as that unspoken reserve army of labor keeping unskilled wages, and so the minimum wage, in check" (9).

The narratives of hopelessness and despair expressed by Chicana/o youth in the previous chapter offers evidence of the impact of neoliberalism on the lives of this generation of young working-class ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles during an era of economic restructuring in the city. Yet, it did not go unquestioned or without an equally powerful response from those communities directly affected by these transformations. The 1992 Los Angeles rebellions, for instance, may have been depicted as a modern-day "race riot" by the corporate media or politicians searching for answers to the upheaval that left more than fifty people dead, hundreds injured, and thousands more incarcerated, but as many social scientists studying the rebellion suggest, it did more than give society a glimpse at "race relations" in urban cities like Los Angeles, California. The 1992 Los Angeles rebellions were an indicator of the growing discontent of African Americans and Latinos with the inequalities of the "ghetto" and "transnational barrio" (Valle and Torres, 1998). Besides creating new tensions between communities, the emergence of a "Latino Metropolis" only ensured that new political actors and strategies would surface to contest the shifting political economies of the region through a much more multi-faceted approach to social justice in the City of Angels. As Saskia Sassen argues, "Current conditions in global cities are creating not only new structurations of power but also operational and rhetorical openings for new types of political actors that may have been submerged, invisible, or without voice" (2003: 61). Indeed, the aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles rebellions produced new and innovative anti-racist, labor, and environmental justice movements between traditional racialized groups and new ethnic immigrants from

Latin America and Asia. These coalitions would merge to create a formidable grassroots response to the shifting logic of the racial, social, and economic order in Los Angeles.

The Rise of a Grassroots Los Angeles

Scholars of new social movements in Los Angeles contend that the emergence of new political subjectivities during the 1990s reflected the demographic shifts in communities of color throughout the region (Brodkin, 2007; Widener, 2008; Gottlieb et al., 2005). The 1970s and 1980s are emblematic of the drastic de-industrialization of most heavy industries that precipitated the mass exodus of Mexican, Black, and white families from working class neighborhoods. In their place, newly arriving immigrants moved in to these neighborhoods prompting a shift in social relations between those families that could not make the exodus and the recent immigrant population. What were considered traditional Chicano or Mexican barrios rapidly became pluri-ethnic "transnational" barrios with the arrival of new immigrant populations to such places as the greater Eastside of Los Angeles and Southeast Los Angeles. Of these "new groups," Mexican, Latin American, and Asian migrants are the overwhelming majority of those making the traditional barrio or ghetto their home. Besides shifting the local racial/gender/social hierarchies and regimes, these new "transnational communities" are making demands at the workplace and in their communities. New social struggles focusing on organizing the flexible labor force of the neoliberal city, anti-racist and anti-police violence struggles, and environmental justice struggles, all reflect the pluri-racial/ethnic and multicultural makeup of a "new Left" (Brodkin, 2007; Widener, 2008; Gottlieb et al., 2005).

The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the proliferation of local, regional, and national responses to the introduction of neoliberal capitalism and structural reforms

throughout the Americas. Where in previous eras, armed revolution, peasant uprisings, and collective responses towards reform were commonplace in order to seize state power, the new responses coming from the ground were uniquely different. These "new social movements" sought democratic incorporation within the nation-state, demanding land rights, indigenous and Afro-Latin rights, women's rights, human rights, and formal recognition (Escobar, Alvarez, Dagnino, 1998; Hale, 1997). Los Angeles is a special case unlike any other "global city." Its geographical proximity as a major economic and cultural metropole to Mexico, Latin America, and the Pacific Rim, captures the dual lives of "transnational communities" that migrate to and from Los Angeles to work in the global factories of its flexible economies. This results in these "transnational communities" demanding rights that are traditionally only afforded to citizens of the nation-state. Often referred to as embodying "cultural citizenship," these communities are using direct democratic tactics and strategies to organize at the workplace, in their communities, and on a national level for immigration rights and reforms (Flores and Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1997).

Karen Brodkin (2007), writing on labor organizing in Los Angeles during the 1980s and 1990s, contends that this new labor activism reflects the re-composition of the working class due to changes in the economic order of Los Angeles and the globe. Women of color and immigrant women in particular are important agents in this re-composition as they are introduced into the international division of labor as factory workers, servants, and maids. These women are contesting internal patriarchal structures within traditional labor organizing and creating community/labor spaces that function on democratic, horizontal, and de-centered forms of organizing and decision-making (Bonacich, 1999; Ching Yoon Louie, 2001). With a great majority of the new workers

composed of a relatively young female workforce, it is no surprise that they are at the forefront of this new labor movement.

For Chicanas/os who have traditionally organized and maneuvered in these spaces, it means building alliances between both U.S. born ethnic Mexicans, Latinos, and new immigrant communities. This is reflected in the changing makeup of the ethnic Mexican and Latino family in Los Angeles. Besides gender roles changing, as the result of women's increased presence within the new low-wage labor economies, the ethnic Mexican and Latino family is more than likely made up of different citizenship statuses within its members. U.S. born youth, in particular, may be living in households with parents who do not have proper documentation or mixed-documentation households. This diversity within the ethnic Mexican and Latino family threatens to challenge a century and a half of tensions between U.S. born ethnic Mexicans and those born in Mexico. Moreover, it brings immigration rights into a discussion over working conditions, rights to work, racism, and environmental justice in communities of color.

In Brodkin's assessment, youth, in particular, gained valuable political organizing experience by participating in the new labor movement. Supporting the efforts of their parents and relatives, youth of color during the 1990s gained their first taste of structured political organizing by broadening the scope of the new labor movement to include anti-racist, anti-violence, immigration rights, and environmental justice issues. For example, Chicana/o, Mexicana/o, and Latina/o youth organized in the thousands against the anti-immigration initiative, Proposition 187, in 1994 and against the end of affirmative action in the universities in 1996 (Ibid; Martinez, 1998). Focusing their efforts on creating the same type of democratic, horizontal, and de-centered methods for organizing that their parents were practicing, Chicana/o and Latina/o youth became a formidable force in their

own right during the 1990s, as they rejected the feeling of "hopelessness" and "despair" so prevalent during the 1980s.

Daniel Widener (2008), following Brodkin's analysis, identifies two unique forms of social justice activism and radicalism that emerged during the 1990s that sought to redefine the terrain of struggle in Los Angeles. The first two are similar to the new labor movement discussed by Brodkin. The mobilization of immigrant-led trade unions and the rise of social justice non-profit organizations are for Widener, "the bedrock of contemporary local radicalism." But there is a third sector that Widener discusses that is pertinent to this dissertation. Widener acknowledges the emergence of local youth radicalism as an important catalyst for present-day social justice activism in Los Angeles. Moreover, he argues that such activism is inspired and takes as its reference different ideological approaches such as anarchism and Zapatismo. Widener states:

> Where unions most clearly represent the redistributive social democratic aims, youth radicalism offers the clearest evidence of the influence of anarchism, the Zapatistas, and the antiglobalization movement in efforts to radically remake Los Angeles.[60] In a broad arc from MacArthur Park, up through Echo Park and East Hollywood, and across the Los Angeles River into Highland Park and El Sereno exists an archipelago of cafes, bookstores, and performance spaces, all of which speak to this broader structure of feeling that is particularly predominant among Latino youth. From the irreverence of the Radical Teen Cheerleaders, a Latina ensemble whose chants and dance routines and coordinating anarcho-syndicalist-inspired red and black outfits enliven demonstrations, to the designers of t-shirts featuring a modified Heineken beer advertisement altered to read "huelgista" (striker), this milieu is important in that it demonstrates how working-class youth of color have taken the lead in producing an L.A. variant of a politics "which is less about seizing state power than about exposing, delegitimizing, and dismantling mechanisms of rule" (205).

Widener's argument suggests that youth of color, rejecting traditional notions of power, created innovative revolutionary horizons during the 1990s. Critiquing the term "left" because of its fragmented meaning for many of their parents (Martinez, 1998),

Chicana/o youth sought different inspirations that resonated not only with their political beliefs but also with their cultural and artistic identities. These inspirations include such examples as the rejuvenated hemispheric indigenous movements in the Americas, the anti-Persian Gulf War movement, and various counter-culture music and art movements throughout Los Angeles. Of these different struggles that resonated with Chicana/o youth artists, musicians, activists, and community organizers, I argue that the January 1, 1994 Zapatista indigenous uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, in particular, became the major political and cultural inspiration behind the explosion of a unique type of Chicana/o radical youth political and cultural activism that re-conceptualized prior notions of power and political action in barrios throughout Los Angeles.

This chapter discusses the political and cultural resonance of the Zapatistas and Zapatismo on the lives of Chicanas/os in Los Angeles, California. It asks: What is Zapatismo? How has it captured the imagination of social movements throughout the world? What was the initial resonance of Zapatismo in an urban metropolis like Los Angeles, California? What, in particular, in the Zapatistas' many proposals, ideas, and actions, captured the political imagination of Chicana/o activists, artists, musicians, and community organizers? And how did Chicano solidarity with the Zapatistas interpret and conceptualize these proposals, ideas, and actions in their daily lives, cultural production, and political organizing?

THE ZAPATISTA UPRISING

> In 1993, the prospect was very, very closed…how everything was closed and then the Zapatistas opened a door of hope. Hope is the very essence of popular movements: people mobilize only when they have hope. And hope in the sense of Vaclav Havel. Hope is not a conviction that something will happen. Hope is the conviction that something makes sense whatever happens (Interview with Gustavo Esteva by Nic Paget-Clarke, September 6-7, 2005).

On January 1, 1994 the world awakened to the first revolution of the 21st century when hundreds of poorly armed indigenous men and women from the southeastern Mexican state of Chiapas, raised up in arms and declared war on the Mexican government.[14] Calling themselves the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* or EZLN, and invoking the rich revolutionary tradition of Mexico's most cherished hero, Emiliano Zapata, the *Zapatistas* (as they called themselves) held successful military operations throughout Chiapas, surprising officials and police in seven municipalities throughout the state and embarrassing the regional military headquarters with their swift surprise attacks (Collier and Quaratiello, 2005; Harvey, 1998). In their first communiqué and newspaper, *El Despertador Mexicano*[15] to Mexican civil society, the EZLN stated:

> Mexicans: workers, campesinos, students, honest professionals, Chicanos, and progressives of other countries: We have begun the struggle that is necessary to meet the demands that never have been met by the Mexican State: work, land, shelter, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice, and peace (EZLN, *El Despertador Mexicano* on December 31, 1993).

The document, which was published and released a day before the January 1, 1994 offensive by the EZLN, included both a declaration of war against the Mexican government and a call to Mexican civil society to support the EZLN's struggle for basic rights. *El Despertador* follows:

> We call on all of you to join our movement because the enemies we face, the rich and the State, are cruel and inhuman. They will put no limit on their bloody instinct to destroy us. It is necessary to struggle on all fronts and from there, with your sympathy, your solidarity, the dissemination that you give our cause, your adoption of the ideals that we are demanding, your incorporation of the

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[14] The Introduction to this dissertation offers a more thorough and in-depth analysis of the Zapatistas and Zapatismo. This section is intended as a brief overview of the January 1st, 1994 EZLN uprising and the first appearance of Zapatismo on the Mexican international scene. It also includes the responses by Mexican civil society and Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activists from Los Angeles to the EZLN uprising.

[15] Published December 31, 1993, *El Despertador Mexicano* included the Declaration of War by the EZLN, the editorial that is quoted above, and the Revolutionary Women's Laws.

> Revolution by raising up your people wherever they may be found, these are very important factors in our final triumph (ibid).

While the communiqué may have followed the same discourse used by other revolutionary groups in Latin America, their demands for "democracy, freedom, and justice," signaled a break from the traditional seizing of power so common in the revolutionary imagination of the Americas. In the days after the uprising a cease-fire was agreed upon after twelve days of fighting between the EZLN and the Mexican government and Mexico and the world awakened to a second set of circumstances. The uprising was not an isolated act of rebellion, so common throughout the history of the country. Instead, as more information spread through the Internet and a growing alternative media, it was clear that the EZLN uprising was the culmination of many years, decades, and centuries of genocide and neglect of the indigenous people of Chiapas.

Poverty, indentured servitude, death, and disease plagued the Mayan communities of Chiapas for centuries.[16] For the Zapatistas, the most recent example of this neglect on the part of the Mexican government came with the passing of the tri-national North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, between Mexico, the United States, and Canada, and the decade long introduction of neoliberal reforms after the 1982 monetary crisis forced Mexico into a deep depression. In their analysis, the most recent president of Mexico, Carlos Salinas de Gortari had declared a "death sentence" on the indigenous populations of Mexico with his neoliberal plans and restructuring of the revolutionary Mexican constitution, opening up Mexico to private and foreign investment. The Zapatistas only response was to fight and exclaim, "*ya basta*!' (Enough is enough!), to

[16] For a rich discussion on the material conditions facing the indigenous peoples of Chiapas, read the Zapatista communiqué "The Southeast in Two Winds: A Storm and a Prophecy" which was written in 1992 and in preparation for the EZLN uprising.

the neoliberalization of the country and proclaim that an "otro mundo es posible" (another world is possible) to Mexicans throughout the country.[17]

In his first interviews after the uprising, the charismatic Zapatista spokesperson, Sub-Comandante Marcos, remembered that the Zapatistas were willing to fight and resist until the end in order to stop the genocide of indigenous communities in Chiapas (Le Bot, 1997). Marcos suggests that their plans changed as Mexican civil society caught immediate notice of the uprising and responded with an immense amount of support for the rebel army.

Responses to the Zapatista Uprising in Mexico

It is crucial in this chapter to understand not only the Zapatista uprising and early formation of Zapatismo but also the response by Mexican civil society to the Zapatista uprising and its formation as a social movement in Mexico. Years of apathy and dismay by Mexicans over the 71 years of corrupt one-party rule by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) had made Mexico one of the least likely places for revolutionary change in the hemisphere. An overwhelming distrust in the local and national government and its wealthy class of powerful politicians and businessmen, all fed into the

[17] The second document to come out after the January 1, 1994 EZLN uprising, "the First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle" opens, "TO THE PEOPLE OF MEXICO: MEXICAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS: We are a product of 500 years of struggle: first against slavery, then during the War of Independence against Spain led by insurgents, then to avoid being absorbed by North American imperialism, then to promulgate our constitution and expel the French empire from our soil, and later the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz denied us the just application of the Reform laws and the people rebelled and leaders like Villa and Zapata emerged, poor men just like us. We have been denied the most elemental preparation so they can use us as cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our country. They don't care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health care, no food nor education. Nor are we able to freely and democratically elect our political representatives, nor is there independence from foreigners, nor is there peace nor justice for ourselves and our children.

But today, we say ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

apathy and growing anger of the majority of Mexicans who were struggling to make a decent living in Mexico.

The introduction of neoliberal reforms to the Mexican constitution, at the time one of the hemisphere's most liberal documents, changed the social landscapes of Mexico significantly. The dismantling of Article 27 of the Mexican constitution by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari in 1992 changed Mexico's land distribution policies and left open Mexico's rural farmlands for private and foreign investment by corporations and wealthy landowners. This had an immediate effect on Mexican rural communities. One of the results of the constitutional reforms was the abandonment and sale of ejido communal lands because of a concerted effort to diminish government subsidies to farmers and pressure to drop prices for their products to stay competitive in the global market. Having no way to sustain themselves, Mexican agricultural workers were forced to migrate to the United States or to the overpopulated industrial capital of Mexico City. The industrial urban worker also felt the repercussions of neoliberal reforms in Mexico. Daily wages dropped and unemployment rates soared in cities as factory work moved to cheaper "free trade zones" near the northern border regions of the country. At the same time, Mexico's most affluent political and social class became some of the wealthiest individuals in the world.

For Indigenous communities throughout the country, the consequences of Salinas de Gortari's changes to Article 27 were devastating. Many Indigenous groups were displaced from their traditional lands in order to make room for infrastructural projects that would generate new markets in energy, bio-speculation, natural gas, and petroleum. In turn, these Indigenous groups were forced to work for wealthy cattle ranchers, landowners, or move to the city and find work in an urban society that deemed them dispensable and invisible.

Scholars writing on the impact of the Zapatistas on Mexican society contend that the Zapatista uprising immediately gave hope to millions of Mexicans who directly felt the impact of Salinas de Gortari's plan for Mexico's introduction to the global economy. (Leyva-Solano, 1998; Gilly, 1998; Esteva, 1998) Mexicans overwhelmingly saw the Zapatistas as a symbolic response to the decaying living conditions throughout the country. This reaction reinvigorated leftist organizations, indigenous groups, unions, and other sectors of the Mexican left to "converge" on the momentum provided by the Zapatista response.[18] (Leyva-Solano, 1998) Oaxacan organic intellectual, Gustavo Esteva, argues that the January 1, 1994 Zapatista uprising and the convergence of the Mexican Left against NAFTA and the policies of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, were responsible for the demise of Mexico's one-party rule by the PRI (Esteva 2005). Salinas de Gortari's heir apparent, Ernesto Zedillo, would be the PRI's last president of the millennium as he dealt with the economic crisis he inherited from Salinas de Gortari and contended with the rising tide of Zapatismo's resonance across Mexico. Of course the Zapatistas and the Mexican Left, did not accomplish this by themselves, rather their uprising and eventual call to Mexican "civil society" triggered popular public outcry and discontent over six decades of PRI corporativist rule in Mexico. Coupled with the economic collapse of the Mexican Peso following NAFTA's introduction in 1994, the Zapatistas ushered in a new era of political and cultural resistance in Mexico, which is still playing itself out today.

How do these events that took place in the span of a year resonate with the growing majority of Mexicans who were forced to make the treacherous journey to the United States to work in the factories, buildings, and fields of the US cities and

[18] Xochitl Leyva-Solano calls this the convergence of "Mexico Rebelde" in her article, "The New Zapatista Movement: Political Levels, Actors, and Political Discourse in Mexico" (1998).

agricultural centers? In this case, the transnationalization and time/space folding of Mexican politics impacted the "transnational barrios" and neighborhoods of ethnic Mexicans throughout the United States significantly. Take for instance, the reactions by Los Angeles-based Chicana/o activists, artists, and musicians to the Zapatista uprising and the first three years of Zapatismo.

Responses to the Zapatista Uprising in Los Angeles

> I've always felt the importance of this idea (connecting art with social activism) but I didn't know how to begin, and then there was the Zapatista uprising in 1994. I started reading the communiqués from the EZLN, and they were poetry! Their communiqués quoted the Popol Vuh, Malcolm X, Victor Jara and presented their ideas in a way that was accessible and made sense. At that time I was so hungry for a vision, that it was natural for me to eat this up and personalize their message, that was key (Interview with Jose "Quetzal" Flores by Chris Gonzalez Clarke, *In Motion Magazine*, March 27, 1999).

Dignity blooms in Los Angeles at a time when things seem bleak and hopeless. Struggles over better wages and working conditions in the workplace, against the onslaught of anti-immigrant policies, against the increase in police abuse, and against environmental racism, all articulated dignity as a central concept in their organizing. The dignity to work for a livable wage, free of exploitation and deportation became the calling for a new labor movement in Los Angeles that was closely tied to the pro-immigrant rights movement in California (Brodkin, 2007). The interconnected characteristics of these movements that emerged in Los Angeles reflect the power in the concept of "dignity" to speak to the lives of men and women of different ages, races, sexual orientations, and experiences. Dignity as a politics transformed these social movements to search for alternatives where local politicians and the economic and social conditions of the city offered none. As stated in the opening for this chapter, the multi-faceted social movements that emerged during the 1990s reflect this re-composition of

social actors that not only sought better wages but also better living conditions in their neighborhoods.

Chicana/o youth, in particular, took strongly to the concept of "dignity." Having seen their parents suffer through the lowering of wages and working conditions and being affected by the hyper-racialized discourses of an intense xenophobic and racist backlash against Mexican and Latino immigration to California, Chicana/o and Latina/o youth became politicized in a broad web of politics that worked locally but sought global changes.

One is reminded by these responses to injustices that memories of life in Los Angeles, California prior to January 1, 1994 are expressed vividly by many Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activists, artists, musicians, and community organizers as a sense of "loneliness" and "despair," or as musician Quetzal Flores stated in the opening quote, "I was so hungry for a vision." The dismantling of the U.S. "welfare-state," the divestment of public resources to the barrios and ghettos of Los Angeles, and the political and social aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellions had left communities of color in a state of disarray. Youth of color in Los Angeles had the highest unemployment rates in the state and the mass incarceration of men of color in a growing prison system left very few opportunities for young Chicano males like Quetzal to work for a livable wage. Moreover, Chicana/o youth rejected the vertical structures of community agencies, local progressive politicians, and leftist organizations; they instead sought de-centralized and horizontal structures in which to pursue their artistic and political work.

Literally overnight, the twelve-day Zapatista rebellion that started on January 1, 1994 throughout the southeastern state of Chiapas, Mexico changed the sense of hopelessness and despair between a generation of first and second generation working-class Chicana/o youth. *El Despertador Mexicano* highlighted Chicanos as one of the

groups it called upon in its opening paragraph, Chicana/o youth answered the call to support the Zapatista struggle by organizing solidarity networks throughout the Southwest. They joined other groups in the United States that were awed by the Zapatista cause and became involved in solidarity networks spanning the urban landscapes of Los Angeles as well as regional and national activist networks.

Roberto Flores, co-founder of the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE and a longtime community organizer, remembered the first notice of the Zapatista uprising and his reaction to the events of January 1, 1994:

> Right after we heard about the uprising, the so-called progressive Chicano politicians started organizing a human rights delegation to Chiapas. I included myself in the delegation even though they wondered who I was. Some of them knew me from other circles, but for the most part they were there to be human rights observers and gain political capital with progressives in Los Angeles. Their mentality was "Oh, poor Indians. We have to help them and protect them." I went right after fifteen years of working with the league.[19] That structure was vertical and centralized. And so when I saw Zapatismo it resonated with the rest of my life, it resonated with what I was struggling for. It resonated with all the struggles. And the ones I mention are just a few of the many, many struggles that we were going through. And I was with others that we always sought horizontality and that the organization or the party were not enough nor did they represent our desires. And it resonated with our belief in local autonomy, the respect for our conditions. And so when the Zapatista uprising came it was a breath of fresh air, an amazing thing, and so I needed to be there. I needed to be there right away.

Roberto's recollection of his first experience with Zapatismo captures a much older Chicana/o organizer's feelings of discontent with the progressive left in Los Angeles that did not speak to the "desires" and beliefs of many who wanted a different way of organizing. Vertical decision making structures and unfulfilled promises by politicians and the organized left, offered no place for Chicana/o youth to participate

[19] Roberto was an active member of the Communist Party.

within the decision making process, except as a mass to be mobilized by a committee or party.

Roberto went on to mention that after his trip to Chiapas, days after the 1994 uprising, his experiences deeply impacted his son Quetzal, who faced a different set of concerns than his father. For Quetzal, Zapatismo arrived at a time when he and his friends were constantly facing police harassment in the streets and racism in the schools. Quetzal reflects:

> Part of what we were facing during those times is the after effects of the Rodney King riots. There seemed to be so much more police during the 1980s and 1990s. The police department tried to shut down the streets and any youth of color was a suspect. I remember constantly running from the police just for being brown…This feeling of being a criminal is something that we felt at school, too. When I arrived to college, the feeling that we didn't belong there because we were Mexican was always expressed by our professors and other privileged students who believed we were there because we were affirmative action babies.

Quetzal, was an emerging musician at the time of the Zapatista uprising. He was already well connected to a growing Chicana/o art and music scene that spoke to the issues of police brutality, racism, and poverty so prevalent in their communities. The Zapatistas also resonated with his musical expressions:

> At the time, we were playing gigs at whatever space would take us. Since we were independent artists and we were young and we had a strong support base, corporate labels always tried to sign us. We felt that they wanted to set the type of music we played and for what audiences. Many of us wanted to continue making music for our communities and build communities. We wanted to practice our art and share it. The Zapatistas inspired us when they came out because they said, '*ya basta*!' We don't have to be who you want us to be.

For Chicana/o youth who were becoming politically active in their schools and neighborhoods, the Zapatistas offered an internal reflection on how they wished to relate to one another within their activism. Carla, a member of the self-identified Zapatista-inspired space, Casa del Pueblo remembers:

> So when we started to get involved in stuff, like organizing against Prop. 187 or the first Gulf War, or like police stuff, people always tried to tell us how to do things. They told us how to march, when to march, what day and what was the best thing to do. We were like '*Chale*!' we want to do things our way. And so we started getting together in our schools, I was a senior in high school when the Zapatistas took up arms, but I knew a lot of *compañeras/os* who were in college, like CSUN or UCLA. They met with us and we started organizing. They shared with us the *compas* communiqués and we would read them. Then we would talk about what we read. The Sup, his words were like poetry that we really understood. And then we talked about how they organized themselves, the way that women were included in making decisions. What consensus was or what democracy could be. I don't want to make it sound like they were the only one's because we saw this too when we started organizing with the unions and day laborers but the EZLN really helped share that dream of how we wanted to work with each other.

Other narratives suggest that the Zapatistas provided a new political language in which to speak about the current political, economic, and social conditions in urban communities throughout Los Angeles. This includes the Zapatistas use of the term "neoliberalism" and "dignity" in their political discourse. Esperanza, a Salvadoran woman activist from South Central Los Angeles who participated in several peace delegations to Zapatista communities in Chiapas, explains:

> When the Zapatistas mention that 'neoliberalism' was the 'death sentence' for indigenous peoples, we were like 'yeah that is exactly what we feel too.' So many of us didn't know what neoliberalism meant or what it represented in our daily lives. We knew of Marxism and Communism, well we thought we did…there was such a sour taste of most *comunistas* and *socialistas* because they always tried to organize us. You know. They would come by our marches and try to take over. Many of them were white and didn't know what we were experiencing in our barrios. When the Zaps came out with neoliberalism, and how it was a 'death sentence' and how it wanted to kill our 'dignity,' well that really spoke to us. It wanted to destroy life, and the only way to respond is through '*dignidad*,' through community, how simple but powerful…Then came autonomy and these other terms, well it just kept talking to us as we continued to organize.

If as Esperanza agrees with the Zapatistas, neoliberalism is the "death sentence" of her community, then the struggle for "dignity" meant a response to this "death sentence".

Micaela, a Mexican-born Chicana, who was raised in a working-class mostly immigrant community in southeastern Los Angeles, discusses Zapatista "dignity" as a concept that became useful to her organizing when she was in college:

> When I arrived to college. I was the first you know, to attend a college. It was hard for *mujeres* to leave home. That's how it was for me. But I knew that it was important to open that space for other *mujeres* to say that "Yeah we can go to college.' Anyway, when I got to college and I started getting involved with MECHA [*Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlan*] and other organizations, we started working with Justice for Janitors and other people that were doing workers rights. We also started working, like the first to work with day laborers. Back then, a lot of student groups didn't do that work with community, but many of us came from these backgrounds. We were tied to them and had relatives who worked in the *loncheras* and the *callejones*. My mom, I remember working as a hotel maid…And so within our circles we had reading groups, and we started reading updates on the Zapatistas and reading their communiqués and their speeches and we were like 'Damn! This shit is tight!' and then they used things like 'dignity' to explain what they wanted, well it inspired us…Dignity became our tool, our way of applying Zapatismo in our work. It still is but back then when things were fresh, what person wouldn't want to fight for their dignity, and not just any dignity *pero* the type that tries to get rights for *inmigrantes* without papers or for the *paleteros* or for the *doñas* that sell flowers in the street or for the youth. It was a powerful word. It still is.

The comments by Esperanza and Micaela reflect a rejuvenated discussion and critique of racism, capitalism, sexism, and homophobia. The distrust of Marxism, and specifically, Leninist-Marxist centralized organizing among Chicana/o youth, and the apparent victory of Western Capitalism over the Soviet Communist bloc, had left a void in analysis and criticism over Capital, patriarchy, and white supremacy's global expansion as the overwhelming value systems that govern the world. The Zapatistas' critique of "neoliberal capitalism" and racism in Mexico produced a political language

that mirrored the lives of people in Los Angeles and opened up a space for Chicana/o youth to create their own political language that spoke to their experiences and their methods of producing an analysis of social conditions situation in Los Angeles.

Besides the Zapatistas offering a breath of fresh air to the internal issues Chicana/o youth were encountering within the Chicana/o Left, other Chicana youth found resonance in the inclusivity of the Zapatista struggle when it came to the role of indigenous women within the movement. Lupe, a Chicana artist from Boyle Heights, discusses her first encounters with the Zapatista movement:

> I went to Chiapas in 1997 during the *encuentro* with the EZLN and Chicanos from LA. I went specifically to talk to the *mujeres*, learn from them and share our experiencias. The mujeres here in LA, we were reading the communiqués and many of us read about the EZLN Womens Revolutionary Laws, *las leyes revolucionarias para la mujer*…I think the Womens Revolutionary Laws included women's autonomy, the right to marry whoever she wants, like birth rights, the right to participate in making decisions, education, things that women have been fighting for, for years. When I saw Comandanta Ramona speak and heard her words, it was amazing. Such a small fierce *indigena* woman who was proud to wear her *traje* and speak her language was partly responsible for the uprising, it really impacted us *mujeres* here in Cali and LA. We wanted our own spaces and we wanted to decolonize our circles. The Zapatista women opened up our eyes to so many things as *indigena* women.

Chicanas, Mexicanas, and Latinas were greatly impacted by the Women's Revolutionary Laws (Appendix I) fought for and created by Zapatista women before the Zapatista uprising. The laws helped forge an understanding of the role women could play within their own organizing and within their communities. It played a vital role in ensuring a consistent gender analysis within emerging Zapatista-inspired activism in Los Angeles.[20]

[20] I discuss Chicana urban Zapatismo in greater detail at the end of this chapter, using examples of several Chicana art, multimedia, and music collectives.

Crucial to the narratives expressed in this section are questions over political and cultural resonance that attracted Chicana/o activists, artists, musicians, and community organizers towards understanding, studying, and applying some of the basic principles of *Zapatismo* in their daily lives. But how is this political and cultural resonance produced and interpreted? How does a rural-based movement thousands of miles away from the barrios and ghettos of Los Angeles, California inspire populations in urban areas to also struggle for autonomy and self-determination?

AN INTERNATIONALISM OF HOPE

> We are in desperate need of another politics. But it is no longer the politics of the clenched fist, the punch of power. Ours is the politics of interlaced fingers, a politics that develops when the 'I' and the 'you' come together as 'we', when people clasp their hands, warm palms touching, fingers woven together, and build a rebellion that deeply interconnects us, a rebellion of relationships which embraces differences, a rebellion that desires to share rather than to take power. (The Notes from Nowhere Collective, 2003: 388)

> We have our own notion of autonomy and we exert it in our spaces. But we know that it is not the only one, and it is not necessarily the better one. We are inviting you to bring your own experience, your own vision, to this common space, to weave there a consensus and to identify divergences, in order to explore what we can do together. You are the ones to give us alternative orientation. We are just committing ourselves to defend the positions emerging as a consensus as our own. (Sub-comandante Marcos, In Esteva and Prakash, 1998)

In the years after the Zapatista uprising, *Zapatismo* has developed as one of the most respected and revolutionary local proposals for global justice throughout the world. What the Zapatistas found out after their initial uprising was that individuals and communities across Mexico and the world felt similar sentiments to the effects of neoliberal global capitalism on their lives. While in previous eras, it was difficult to connect these many sentiments with each other besides the use of traditional solidarity networks that existed, the new information era ushered in by globalization produced

immediate connections between struggles through the Internet, media, and other forms of informational technology, or what Harry Cleaver calls, an "electronic fabric of struggle" (Cleaver, 1998).

Although the Zapatista struggle is discussed as ushering in the development of new forms of communication between struggles across space, it is their insistence in face to face dialogue and convergence that characterizes early Zapatismo . Manuel Callahan, calls this insistence on meeting and dialoguing, a "politics of space and *encuentro*" (2004). Within the Zapatista "politics of space and *encuentro*" is the need to meet, discuss, share, and propose ideas, visions, and dreams of the world we wish to create. It is a response to the Zapatista motto of "another world is possible." This aspect of *Zapatismo* asks, if another world is possible then how do we begin to form this world, knowing what we are up against and knowing that we are all different and have different ways of working towards that world? What the Zapatistas propose is a politics that is formed from the convergence of experiences and approaches that each person brings to the table. During the early peace negotiations following the uprising, the Zapatistas made a series of political calls and consultations with Mexican civil society over the course of the Zapatista indigenous movement. One such call by the Zapatistas invited Mexican civil society to engage and learn about the Zapatistas and the indigenous struggle through an actual encounter between Mexican civil society and Zapatista communities in 1995. Inviting Mexican civil society to the jungles of Chiapas, the Zapatistas have maintained the local focus of their struggle while at the same time bridging their experiences with those of people in other rural and urban areas. This has kept the Zapatistas from being pigeonholed as an "indigenous movement" rather than a movement that seeks "democracy, freedom, and justice" for all Mexicans. Mexican civil society responded by accepting the Zapatista invitation and meeting with the indigenous communities first

hand. Since then, the Zapatistas have created numerous spaces and invited people from all over the world to meet with them and discuss what world they wish to create together. This strategy has multiple many purposes. On one level, the focus on meeting the Zapatistas in Chiapas brought national and international attention to the indigenous struggle throughout Chiapas and thus strengthened the solidarity efforts for the Zapatistas. This also included building a Zapatista solidarity movement that could act as a buffer against the low-intensity militarization by the Mexican military on Zapatista communities in Chiapas, Mexico.

On another level, the meetings with different groups from different places and with different experiences offer what Manuel Callahan (2004) suggests is the power of a "politics of space… [a] crucial bridge between different worlds and that bridge is manifest in a new 'international' -not an international based on rigid party doctrines or the dogmas of competing organizations, but an 'International of Hope,' a web constituted by numerous autonomies, without a center or hierarchy, within which various coalitions of discontents can express themselves, in order to dismantle the forces and regimes oppressing all of them". In this case, the Zapatistas offered their working model of "autonomy" and struggle as one of many examples that are emerging throughout the world. They have continued to invite dialogue with national and international civil society to engage Zapatista communities in order to build stronger levels of solidarity and understanding of the root causes of social suffering and what actions might be taken to create an alternative world to neoliberalism.

In the construction of this new "International" that Callahan discusses, the Zapatistas proposed several intercontinental preparatory meetings and encounters throughout the globe, leading up to a larger *encuentro* on July 27, 1996 between individuals, collectives, and organizations from throughout the world who were invited to

the Zapatista *Aguascalientes* of La Realidad in the Lacandon Jungle of Chiapas, Mexico, to meet in the "First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism" (Esteva and Prakash, 1998). To put in perspective the difficulties in organizing and planning such a global event, the late July/early August 1996 encounter came after a mass mobilization in February 1995 of over one third of Mexico's armed forces to Chiapas, executing a low-intensity warfare on Zapatista indigenous communities and autonomous zones. Calling neoliberalism the new "International of Terror," the Zapatistas proposed a new "International of Hope" during the 1996 Intercontinental encounter. The international (of hope) would base itself on the concepts of "dignity, hope, and life." Sub-Comandante Marcos' remarks to the thousands in attendance, speaks to these three concepts:

> Dignity is that nation without nationality, that rainbow that is also a bridge, that murmur of the heart no matter what blood lives it, that rebel irreverence that mocks borders, customs and wars.
>
> Hope is that rejection of conformity and defeat.
>
> Life is what they owe us: the right to govern and to govern ourselves, to think and act with a freedom that is not exercised over the slavery of others, the right to give and receive what is just.
>
> For all this, along with those who, beyond borders, races and colors, share the song of life, the struggle against death, the flower of hope and the breath of dignity.

These concepts spoke to the Zapatistas' demands for "democracy, freedom, and justice."

Those that went to the 1996 "First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism" participated in a new form of global organizing. This new form of global organizing reflected the Zapatistas' call for communities to build greater

networks of communication that would demolish national borders and would connect local struggles across the globe.

> We will make a network of communication among all our struggles and resistance. An intercontinental network of alternative communication against neoliberalism, an intercontinental network of alternative communication for humanity. This intercontinental network of alternative communication will search to weave the channels so that words may travel all the roads that resist. This intercontinental network of alternative communication will be the medium by which distinct [forms of] resistance communicate with one another. This intercontinental network of alternative communication is not an organizing structure, nor has a central head or decision maker, nor does it have a central command or hierarchies. We are the network, all of us who speak and listen (EZLN, 2nd Declaration of La Realidad).

The main objective of the *encuentro* was to break from the politics of the "old left" in terms of creating international solidarity networks and instead build closer relationships based on alliances "for humanity and against neo-liberalism." By inviting people from throughout the world to participate in a broader dialogue than just indigenous rights and culture, the Zapatistas were hoping to establish new forms of communication with struggles throughout the world. Esteva and Prakash (1998) suggest that this strategy of dialogue embedded in the sharing of difference allowed people from different backgrounds and experiences to share their experiences facing the onslaught of global capitalism and neo-liberalism. Esteva and Prakash state:

> Several social movements struggling around the world against the "Global Project" had representation at the Encounter: feminists, gays, and lesbians, blacks, workers, peasants, the unemployed, national liberation movements, leftist political parties or organizations, and former guerilleros. People coming from different social and political struggles of the last fifty years from all over the world, while speaking on their own behalf, also presented the predicaments of those who could not be present. But they did not attempt to think the globe, or even less to manage it. They did not abandon their own cultural roots and backgrounds. They prevented each other from falling into the trap of nice-sounding abstractions or plastic words – aping their counterparts in the "Global Project" (Esteva and Prakash, 1998:177).

The Zapatista intervention of bringing these groups together to dialogue was an attempt to both create a global movement and allow for local cultures to stand on their own two feet as political actors. Radical scholars and activists suggest that the seeds for an alterglobalization movement emerged out of the 1996 Intercontinental *encuentro* in La Realidad (Notes from Nowhere Collective, 2003; Esteva and Prakash, 1998; Callahan, 2004). The transnational networks created during the *encuentro* between groups on different continents mobilized different sectors of the left with indigenous struggles, women's autonomous organizations, and environmental justice organizations. Creating a global movement made of many movements, the alterglobalization movement attacked global capitalism through creativity and locally organized responses to neoliberalism (Notes from Nowhere Collective, 2003). As Roberto Flores explained in a 2001 interview with Peter McLaren:

> The main point here is that in this sense, the Zapatista form of struggle has been looked at as a response not only to the neoliberalism (open market economy and privatization) of the Mexican nation state, but to global neoliberalism. Zapatismo is not only a local or regional response, but has become a prototype of other global responses to their particular conditions created by a global corporate economic system. From this perspective Zapatismo can be looked at as a global response to global neoliberalism. One can say simply that a global problem needs a global solution. To the extent that neoliberalism is affecting the poor and the middle classes on a global scale, it is then the extent that many believe this methodology can be applied in diverse settings. (Interview with Roberto Flores by Peter McLaren, 2001)

One of the first "internationalism of hope" responses took place in Seattle, Washington during the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings. Mobilizing dozens of different movements with no particular leader or head organization, thousands of people converged on Seattle to protest the WTO and its neoliberal trade policies for poor underdeveloped countries throughout the world. Using de-centered forms of protest to stop the WTO meetings from happening, protesters used creativity and a carnival

atmosphere to not only protest the meetings but also share in "life" and "hope." Although it was met with fierce police violence, the "Battle of Seattle," as it was called by many in attendance, signaled a new era of resistance to neoliberal global capitalism, similar to the resonance the Zapatista uprising had over five years prior to the events in Seattle.

Sub-Comandante Marcos, discussing the significance of the Seattle protests with journalist, Gloria Munoz Ramirez (2004), responded:

> In this sense, Chiapas doesn't precede Seattle as much as it announces Seattle. Seattle is the continuation. Seattle is another manifestation of this world rebellion that is gestating outside of political parties, outside of traditional channels of politics. And it's that way with every one of the demonstrations, and I don't mean only those that have followed the WTO and have become its worst nightmare, but other kinds of more lasting demonstrations or mobilizations or movements against the globalization of death and destruction.

The "Battle of Seattle" became a watershed moment for the alterglobalization movement that produced massive demonstrations and protests throughout the first ten years of the 21st century in different places throughout the world, including the protests in Genova, Cancun, Quebec, and Miami.

THE 1997 CHICANO/ZAPATISTA CULTURAL *ENCUENTRO*

By the time of the 1996 Intercontinental *Encuentro* in Chiapas, Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o youth in Los Angeles were already making the connection between the Zapatista struggle for autonomy and indigenous rights and the social justice struggles that were growing in strength throughout Los Angeles and Southern California. The narratives by Zapatista-inspired Chicanas/os of the Zapatista uprising, overwhelmingly focused on the "dignity," "hope," and "inspiration" that the Zapatistas offered a generation of politicized first and second-generation working class Chicanas/os who continued to experience racism, sexism, neglect, and violence at school, at work, and in

the streets. What was left was a direct link and encounter between US Chicanos and the Zapatistas. The August 1997 Zapatista and Chicano *encuentro* in Oventik, Chiapas was organized as that first encounter.

On August 13-16, 1997, over 120 Chicano artists, musicians, activists and students from the Los Angeles-based organization *Big Frente Zapatista* met with the EZLN in the highlands region of Chiapas, Mexico. The *encuentro* labeled the "First Chicana/o and Indigenous Cultural Conference for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism"[21] brought these two distinct groups together to discuss the political and cultural significance of building an international movement for social justice. (Global Exchange, 1997)

Similar to the 1996 Intercontinental *Encuentro* for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism a year before, the four day event, which took place 45 minutes from the highlands colonial town of San Cristóbal de las Casas, began as a cultural and political exchange between Chicano activists, musicians, and public artists and the Zapatista communities of the Altos region of Chiapas. Roberto Flores writes, "The *encuentro* focused its attention on the intersection of culture and autonomy. The main questions at the *encuentro* were: How do Chicanas/os carry out their role in the struggle against neoliberalism and for humanity? How can Chicanas/os utilize art and culture to develop autonomy? How can Chicanas/os learn more about their own history and how can we develop stronger alliances with the Zapatistas?" (Flores, 2008) The idea for the *encuentro* stemmed from direct conversations after the Intercontinental *Encuentro* in 1996 between Chicana/o delegates at the encounter and Zapatista *comandantes*. Several of these Chicana/o delegates followed up on the conversations with the Zapatista

[21] In Spanish, "Encuentro Chican@-Zapatista: En Contra El Neoliberalismo y Para la Humanidad"

leadership and began to organize in Los Angeles and in Chiapas this first encounter between Chicanas/os and the Zapatistas.

Organizing Before the Encuentro

Local organizing for the August 1997 *encuentro* provides an example of the type of collective work Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activists and artists were consistently practicing and fine-tuning. Weekly planning meetings in Los Angeles were held at different people's homes and included dancing, singing, sharing food, and discussing the most recent communiqués. Maria, a participant in the *encuentro* remembers some of these meetings:

> We each had a job to do but we also took turns doing a lot of the jobs… Our meetings had to be different than what we were used to. From how we made decisions to how we went about raising funds, all of the planning had to be collective. With so many amazing artists and musicians, we always had a great time. You had all these musicians creating songs and playing them at meetings or artists dreaming of their next masterpiece. These initial meetings helped with that.

The planning meetings in Los Angeles became an exercise in creating new social relations. The organizers of the *encuentro* and those that wanted to participate in the *encuentro* consistently rehearsed and created workshops and discussions that they wanted to propose to the Zapatistas. The repetitive nature of these workshops was coupled with working groups that read and analyzed Zapatista communiqués. As one participant added, "we had the cultural part down, so we worked on the political as well. The Zapatistas helped with that by making their communiqués so interesting and poetic." Eventually, the meetings were organized around particular Zapatista slogans that mirrored the political and cultural analysis produced by the groups. Roberto Flores writes,

> In addition to logistical matters, the preparation in Los Angeles chiefly consisted of reflecting on the Zapatista *dichos* or slogans; *"ya basta"* (enough), *"nunca mas un México sin nosotros"* (never again a Mexico without us), "*todo para tod@s, nada para nosotros"* (everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves), *"no tenemos que pedir permiso para ser libres"* (we don't have to ask permission to be free), *"mandar obedeciendo"* (lead by obeying), *"queremos un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos"* (we want a world where many worlds fit), *" tod@s somos Marcos"* (we are all Marcos), *"caminar preguntando"* (we walk asking), "*somos iguales porque somos diferentes*" (we are equal because we are different) *"somos un poder político que no busca el poder"* (we are a political power that is looking for power) and *"callar las armas para escuchar las palabras"* (silence the weapons so that we can hear the words). (Flores, 2008)

This process of reflecting on the Zapatistas *dichos* is an indicator that Chicanas/os in Los Angeles were looking at the Zapatistas and Zapatismo not solely for their political and cultural inspiration but also as a theoretical framework that could serve as a source of reflection within their own external and internal organizing. This would become a crucial process in what I will refer to later as the development of "Chicana/o urban Zapatismo" in Los Angeles.

Even though the meetings in Los Angeles were productive in building critical working relationships between the participants of the Zapatista/Chicana/o *encuentro*, the dynamic was different in Chiapas. A small group from Los Angeles made San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, their base of operations. Partially funded by other *Big Frente Zapatista* members in Los Angeles, who worked on fundraisers to help with the cost of organizing the encounter, the small group was responsible for organizing the logistical part of the encounter. They traveled daily through military and immigration roadblocks leading up to Oventik, in the highlands of Chiapas. Facing the increased presence of the Mexican military and the hostility by the military and para-military forces towards "foreigners," this small group of Chicanas/os were on the front lines of making the encounter a reality.

Besides facing daily harassment by Mexican officials, the organizers also struggled to find compromises between what the Zapatistas had in mind for the encounter and what the Big Frente Zapatista had in mind for the week-long encounter. This included the organization and structure of the workshops and discussions. In particular, the participation of women in the encounter became a heated argument between a predominantly male-led Zapatista governing structure and a strong Chicana feminist contingent of Big Frente Zapatista members. For many Chicanas, the Zapatista lure had been the inclusive nature of their movement when it came to the participation of women amongst their ranks. The Zapatista Women's Revolutionary Laws that were reluctantly approved by many of the Zapatista communities and by the Zapatista leadership became a global symbol for an emerging global radical feminism. Yet the on-the-ground reality was that most Zapatista women still had to fight for spaces within a patriarchal community structure (Rojas, 1999; Speed et al. 2006).

Laura and Martha, members of *Big Frente Zapatista* recall these tensions. Laura was one of the Chicana organizers in Chiapas, she remembers these arguments with a mostly Zapatista male leadership:

> First of all, we spoke mostly to men about stuff. We had to ask for permission to talk to the women about stuff. Even in starting the cooperatives we had to convince the men that it was a good thing for women to do their own work and have their own spaces. They wanted to be a part of all the spaces. Our group in LA wanted a woman's workshop for women and when we took this to the community they were like, "NO!" So we really fought over this.

Laura and Martha G. spoke about the tensions brought on before the *encuentro* at the proposal of a woman's table:

> Laura: another part of the work we were doing before the *encuentro* was working with the *mujeres* on getting the co-ops going. The men [Zapatista men] were trippin' when we asked to talk to the women. They were like, 'you can ask us' and we kept insisting that it wasn't the same. You have this thought that just

because they wrote and have the Women's Revolutionary Laws, *que todo está diferente*…

Martha: It really brought things in perspective for us who were organizing the *encuentro*. We were reading the communiqués and thinking that they had everything worked out but there was so much they as communities were working through.

Laura: Yeah, since I was there before the *encuentro*, I kept trying to organize and insist on the table for *mujeres*. They finally agreed and it was awesome.

Martha: It took a while for the *mujeres* [Zapatista women] to come around but once we started the discussions they were awesome.

Laura: The discussions were so intense. You had women from LA who were Mexican, you know Chicana, and they didn't speak Spanish well but you also had Zapatista women who didn't speak Spanish either *y para acabarla* they were taking care of the children. We are talking about little girls and the women.

Martha: I think it was important for us to make this space with the Zapatistas. To see how we have to force these conversations or else they will be left out.

Laura: And it's not like the men weren't trying to interrupt. Interrupting us, both of the groups of women, all the time. Trying to listen in on our conversations. We kept going, working on songs, murals, all kinds of stuff. It was awesome.

Once many of these tensions and issues were tentatively resolved, the encounter offered the young participants a face-to-face opportunity to work with Zapatista communities and bridge these two different experiences.

Meeting the Zapatistas

The Chicana/o delegation from Los Angeles was as diverse as the pluri-ethnic communities they were meeting with. From musicians who played different styles of music and instruments to artists who worked on different types of mediums to students from different campuses and from different student organizations, the Chicana/o delegates came from different parts of Los Angeles and with very different experiences. Some of the participants, for example, did not speak Spanish very well and some not at

all.[22] Representing a unitary "Chicano" experience could not be accomplished throughout the encounter nor was it attempted. Each participant shared their dreams, their visions, and what they faced, being whoever they were and wherever they were from.

With such a large and diverse contingency of Chicana/o artists, musicians, activists, students, and community organizers arriving to Oventik, many of the Chicana/o delegates thought that they would be the majority of those who would attend the encounter. Upon arriving to Oventik, this sentiment was quickly dispelled. Thousands of Zapatista men and women of all ages and from different regions and ethnic groups, arrived from throughout the Altos region and also from other parts of the Zapatista rebel territory. This represented the diversity of the Zapatista indigenous communities and the strength of Zapatismo. The Chicana/o delegation was eventually made a minority compared to the thousands of Zapatistas that participated in the week-long events.

For many Chicanas/os, this was their first time traveling outside of Los Angeles or California. The farthest south they had been was the San Isidro/Tijuana border. Other Chicanas/os who regularly migrated to Mexico with their parents or other relatives found the rural communities of Chiapas to be a stark contrast to the *ranchos* and *ejidos* of Northern, Western, or Central Mexico. These experiences helped shape many of the Chicana/o delegates' understanding of the Mexican indigenous experience. They saw first-hand not only what the Zapatista communities were attempting to build but also how the Mexican government reacted to the Zapatistas. Carlos, a college student from California State University Northridge (CSUN), recalls:

[22] The question of language barriers was a reoccurring one during the encounter. Over five languages were spoken during the four day event. These included but were not limited to Spanish, English, Tzotzil, Tzetzal, and Tojolobal.

> I've never seen such *pobreza*. It's not the same on my grandparents' *ranchos* or land. In Chiapas, indigenous people are treated worse than the dogs in the street. It was really sad entering San Cristobal and seeing a lot of indigenous people beg for change and then you had people ignore them as if they weren't there. That impacted me *un chingo* because in LA there are so many of us who are neglected and are invisible to others. *Tú sabes*. As Chicanos we think of ourselves as indigenous to this land but sometimes we have to be humble that other indigenous people truly have it worse. That is why the Zapatistas are saying "*ya basta!*" That is why I went to the *encuentro*.

Although the encounter was not dedicated to dealing with the power relationship of U.S. born or based Chicanos and the Zapatista indigenous communities, it was a relationship that could not be ignored and one that most of the Chicana/o contingency were humbled by. What most of the Chicanas/os that participated in the encounter found out during the week-long encounter was that although the indigenous communities of Chiapas faced constant neglect, harassment, and lack of resources and opportunities, these conditions do not dominate their everyday lives in such a way that are unable to share their dreams and visions of their hopes for a new Mexico.

Roundtables and Cultural Co-Production

During the four-day event, roundtables were organized around globalization, human rights, art and music as educational and political tools, La mujer or women's rights, and autonomy. These roundtables were all organized with the end product being some form of artistic expression. This included such presentations through performance art and theatre, dance, murals, music, poetry, and spoken word (Flores, 2008).

Finding, bridging, and constructing a working language between distinctly different individuals and groups developed from the sharing of words and gestures between participants and this led to artistic and musical collective creations.[23] When

[23] I find that Guillermo Gomez Pena's description of his first experience with the Zapatistas offers insight into how different experiences shared can bridge the language barriers associated with the first encounter. Gomez Pena writes, "One night Lorena, Tania, Roberto, and I were asked to speak at the *asamblea*. We were to "explain what we did and present a concrete proposal to the community." Half of the village

asked about the encounter's significance, Laura, one of the main organizers of the 1997 event and the co-founder of the Los Angeles-based *El Puente Hacia La Esperanza*, a collective of sweat-shop free artisans and vendors promoting cooperative based consumption, reflected:

> The Zapatista/Chicano *encuentro* provided us the opportunity to link our struggles in Los Angeles with those of the Zapatistas. Before, we organized gigs, fundraisers, protests in front of the Mexican embassy and delegations to Chiapas. Now we saw ourselves as part of a larger struggle; one that includes us as Mexicanas and Mexicanos and as Chicanas and Chicanos on both sides of the frontera…We no longer had to go to Chiapas to be motivated to resist and build something new.

Miguel, a member of the *Estación Libre* collective, a transnational collective of US people of color activists and organizers that conduct annual delegations to Chiapas, also participated as a first-year college student in the 1997 encounter. He recounts:

> I asked *Comandante* David, what we could do to help and he responded: "GO BACK to your *trincheras* and work." It was so simple but it had such an impact on me. It was hard organizing in the US. Prop. 183, 187, and 209 made it hard to be Brown in LA. When the EZ (EZLN) came and said "*Ya Basta*!", we were like, "*Chale*!", "Enough!" Let's organize, and not like the ol' schoolers, but like the Zapatistas. The *encuentro* made that necessary link for us to "blow up" in LA; autonomy everywhere; spaces began to open everywhere; musicians and artists started to work together independently and in collectives; we started to work with community because we were community.

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showed up (and later on Lorena and Tania spoke to the women separately). We clumsily tried to explain to them the form and content of our artwork, and our political agenda as US Latinos. We talked about *Chicanismo*, border culture, the immigration debate and performance art. While attempting to describe our use of Spanglish, an old man raised his hand: "Its sort'a like us. We use many languages to speak to different kinds of people at the same time" (and clearly to establish different levels of complicity and understanding in front of potential "*orejas*" – informants for the army). When we were describing fear of immigration in California, a young man elaborated: "It's like us, here in Mexico. The *ladinos* (urban mestizos) are scared shitless that soon we will take this land back, and they have a reason to be scared." We were humbled by their political intelligence" (Gomez-Pena, 2000:107-108). In Chapter 6, I will discuss further the Zapatista concept of "*encuentro*" in the context of deciphering the transformative and liberatory possibilities of building convergence spaces like *encuentros*. This will be in the context of Chicano/Mexicano/Zapatista transborder political organizing for the Mexican Other Campaign.

Marisol, a Chicana artist from Los Angeles and college undergraduate, shares similar memories:

> It inspired me. It inspired my creative side. My art. How I saw things back home. Like the simple things to the things I couldn't understand… It was such a realization and eye-opening experience that many us of who went still haven't explored its impact on our work.

The 1997 Chicana/o-Zapatista *encuentro* was a watershed moment for Zapatista-inspired Chicanas/os in Los Angeles, California. The narratives of those that attended provide ample evidence of its impact and significance for a Chicana/o cultural politics that branched out from the barrios and ghettos of Los Angeles to the highlands and jungles of Chiapas, Mexico. The organizing leading up to the *encuentro*, the actual encounter with Zapatista men and women, and the explosion of urban Zapatista organizing after the *encuentro*, injected Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activism and cultural production with a locally grounded transnational perspective that would fuel future projects towards autonomy and autonomous organizing.

THE TRANSNATIONAL FLOW OF CHICANISMA/O AND THE POLITICS OF SOLIDARITY

Although the 1997 Zapatista/Chicano *encuentro* was a monumental event for Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activists from Los Angeles, California, it was not the first convergence of Chicanos from the United States and Zapatista indigenous communities. Chicanas/os in solidarity with the Zapatistas had been traveling to Chiapas, Mexico since the 1994 uprising. Creating working relationships with different Zapatista communities and co-operatives, Chicana/o activists, artists, musicians, and organizers continued to meet frequently with the Zapatistas since the 1996 Intercontinental *Encuentro* and the 1997 Chicana/o and Zapatista *Encuentro* in Oventik, Chiapas. The expansion of a complex network of international and national solidarity groups with direct connections

to Zapatista communities, or what Olesen (2005) calls, "international Zapatismo," opened the door for Chicanos and other groups of color to travel as human rights observers or in work brigades to help build clinics, co-operative buildings, potable water systems, and schools. Most Chicanos that arrived to Chiapas went through transnational organizations such as the Mexico Solidarity Network, Global Exchange, or Schools for Chiapas. Others arrived individually or in small groups and went through Mexican civil society organizations like Enlace Civil and Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights office.

As Chicanos and other groups of color familiarized themselves with the Zapatista solidarity movement and travel intensified to Chiapas, they became aware of the power dynamics created between activists from the United States and those from Mexico. The experience of many Chicanos and other groups of color from the U.S., of the Zapatista transnational solidarity movement, was that the overwhelming majority of the participants were U.S. whites and Europeans. The critique stemmed from two prevailing sentiments. The first spoke to U.S. people of color activists claiming a connection to the Zapatista movement vis-à-vis a long history of anti-imperialist and anti-racist work with other revolutionary struggles across the hemisphere. The Black Panther Party's support of Cuba, China, and other anti-imperialist struggles during the 1960s or the Brown Berets' relationship with Mexican and Latin American guerilla groups are examples of 20th century political relationships between U.S. third world activists and anti-imperialist struggles in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In this case, politicized Chicanos, Blacks, Asian Americans, and Northern Natives, saw the Zapatista struggle as not just a struggle for indigenous rights or against neoliberal capitalism but also one tied to ending racism and patriarchal power structures in Mexico. From the perspective of many U.S. people of color activists who arrived to Chiapas, U.S. whites, mestizo Mexicans, and Europeans

often neglected questions of race, gender, and colonialism in their analysis of the Zapatista struggle.

This was often reflected in the second sentiment, which was the uncomfortable feeling of isolation and color-blind racism many U.S. people of color delegates felt while participating in solidarity efforts or other projects in Zapatista communities. In my research on Zapatista transnational solidarity between U.S. people of color and the Zapatistas, many of my Chicana/o interviewees recalled being asked consistently to translate for English speaking "zapa-tourists" that ventured on delegations with no experience working or being in a rural area.[24] The interviewees found this intrusive and disrespectful of their participation in the delegation. Other examples included witness European and U.S. whites flout the rules that many of the delegations had for delegates or the Zapatista laws for the communities. This is not to say that U.S. people of color delegates were not susceptible to these actions, since they brought their own "First World" privileges, tendencies, and assumptions to Chiapas that at times caused disruptions within the Zapatista communities. Nevertheless, white privilege continued to be a problem within Zapatista solidarity organizing.

In response, Estación Libre was created in 1998 by several Los Angeles-based Chicano activists, an Asian American activist from New York, and a number of U.S. white allies who worked in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas. For nearly ten years (1998-2008) Estación Libre facilitated and collectively organized delegations to Chiapas, Mexico between U.S. people of color activists, community organizers, educators, and artists and the Zapatistas. Having a permanent space in the highland colonial town of San

[24] One interviewee went on a Schools for Chiapas delegation where she remembers seeing an elderly white woman with high heels and luggage arrive to the rural mountains of Los Altos to participate in the delegation. Other examples included the most common issue over taking pictures in community. Delegates of color found this to be disrespectful of the Zapatista communities and a possible danger for the communities after they left Chiapas.

Cristobal de las Casas, Estación Libre offered delegates a working space to conduct political and cultural projects with other solidarity groups in town and with specific Zapatista communities with whom they had built relationships.

For ten years, Estación Libre conducted over thirty-five delegations to Zapatista communities and hosted over two hundred people of color participants during that time. Although not all delegates stayed on to work with Estación Libre in the United States, the sheer number of people that participated in delegations meant that a transnational network of many networks would form between U.S. people of color activists from every region of the United States and Zapatista communities in Chiapas.

During Estación Libre delegations, participants met with Zapatista solidarity groups, understanding the daily work of these organizations and their relationship with the Zapatista communities. They also traveled to Zapatista communities in the regions of Los Altos, Las Cañadas, and as far as the Lacandon Jungle region. There they met with Zapatista representatives of different commissions including the different co-operatives dealing with women's issues, health, and education. Moreover, delegates met daily in different political education circles that discussed the role U.S. people of color had in the formation of a global movement for humanity and against neoliberalism and white supremacy. These circles were an intense place of encounter between people with different experiences facing racism, sexism, and homophobia.

Chicana/o delegates and other US people of color delegates did not always have the smoothest relationship. Besides Chicanos participating in disproportionately large numbers, the fraught ethnic, cultural, and national relationship between Chicanos and other ethnic Mexicans in Mexico created frequent misunderstandings between Chicanos and other U.S. people of color groups. Besides language issues, groups of color, other than Chicanas/os, found political discussions and attitudes focusing on Mexican and

Chicano politics versus a politics formed by a plural "people of color" identity. Chicano delegates, on the other hand, tended to connect their experiences to a larger Mexican transnational imaginary that in many cases veiled racial attitudes towards other groups of color.

It is important to note that although these differences protracted many political discussions and attempts at alliance building between Chicanos and other U.S. groups of color, the process of encountering one another and working through these differences became an essential part of the group's collective politicization while they were in Chiapas.[25] The transnational bridge facilitated by Estación Libre offered dozens of US people of color activists, artists, musicians, workers, educators, and community organizers the opportunity to meet with the Zapatistas and other grassroots organizations in a "safe space" where the hopes and dreams offered by Zapatismo and where the trauma of racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of structural, physical, and emotional violence was discussed.

The transnationalization of Chicano political and cultural solidarity articulated two distinct characteristics of what I call, an emerging "Chicana/o urban Zapatismo." First, Chicanos who participated in delegations not only connected with Zapatista communities and other Mexican grassroots organizations but also, and more importantly, constructed crucial cross-racial and gender alliances with other U.S. people of color groups. Chicanas, for instance, were able to discuss and organize with other women of color and Zapatista women on questions of autonomy and the opening of spaces for their participation in different movements. Second, Chicanas/os saw first-hand what Zapatista autonomy and autonomous organizing looked like through their encounters with

[25] For specific examples of these tensions within Estación Libre delegations, see Pablo Gonzalez, "Estación Libre: Chicanismo, Zapatismo, and People of Color Politics in Chiapas, Mexico." MA Report, May 2003, The University of Texas at Austin.

Zapatista communities and through their face-to-face interactions with Zapatista women and men who were dedicated to the construction of autonomy in Chiapas. These transnational experiences became crucial components in bridging a political resonance that was more complex than merely reading Zapatista communiqués and letters or participating in solidarity events in the United States. It became the foundation for an emerging Chicana/o urban Zapatismo in places such as Los Angeles, California. Chapter four will focus on the emergence of Chicana/o urban Zapatismo in greater detail.

SUMMARY

What is "political resonance" and how does it circulate to inspire political and cultural transformation? This chapter has attempted to answer this question by tracing the origins of Chicana/o urban Zapatismo and by investigating the notion of political resonance between Chicana/o youth in Los Angeles, California and the Zapatista indigenous movement of Chiapas, Mexico. Chicana/o youth found resonance and inspiration in the battle cry, "*Ya Basta*!" on January 1, 1994 by a few hundred armed Mayan Indians in the southeastern Mexican state of Chiapas, calling themselves the Zapatistas after the Mexican revolutionary hero, Emiliano Zapata. Through their poetic communiqués and letters to the world and their analysis of racism, neoliberal capitalism, and power in Mexico, the Zapatistas captured the imagination of many sectors of Mexican society, both in Mexico and in the United States. Seeing their name in the original Zapatista declaration of war, Chicanos of all ages were reinvigorated with a revolutionary fervor not witnessed in over twenty years. Although displaced from a prior generation of progressive and radical political organizing within the Chicano community, Chicano youth quickly captured the energy streaming from the Zapatista uprising and blended it with their own grassroots battle cry for "dignity" and "hope" and against the

increase in police violence and imprisonment, the proliferation of the global economy, and the struggle against statewide anti-immigrant laws.

Searching for more than a politics of solidarity with the Zapatistas, Chicana/o youth inspired by the Zapatistas writing and political actions shifted their understanding to a new form of "internationalism" that saw Chicana/o youth visit regularly the Zapatista indigenous communities in Chiapas. The apex of such political and cultural encounters occurred in August of 1997 when two hundred Chicana/o activists, artists, musicians, and community organizers traveled to the Zapatista political and cultural center of Oventik in the Highlands region of Chiapas to meet with the surrounding Zapatista communities. The weeklong event captured a glimpse of what the Zapatista resonance was for Chicanas/os from Los Angeles, the cultural expression of resistance and the bringing back of politics to Chicana/o cultural production. From these constant face to face encounters, like the 1997 encounter, Chicana/o activists forged a transnational politics that would help redefine prior conceptualizations of political and cultural solidarity and further their own politicization in Los Angeles, California. Chapter 4 will discuss further the Zapatista resonance in an urban area like Los Angeles, California, or what I call, "Chicana/o urban Zapatismo."

CHAPTER 4

Chicana/u Urban Zapatismo and Autonomy in Los Angeles, California

Chapter 2 and 3 discussed the material conditions faced by Zapatista-inspired Chicanas/o activists, artists, and community organizers in Los Angeles, California before and just after the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico. Forged from years of neglect and feelings of hopelessness and fear, these groups of predominantly Chicana/o youth from the working class barrios of Los Angeles began questioning the structures of power that deemed them a disposable menace and in turn found resonance in their struggles with those of indigenous Mayans in Chiapas, Mexico. Beginning with solidarity efforts to support the Zapatista struggle in Chiapas and eventually making contact with Zapatista communities in Chiapas, Mexico, Zapatista-inspired Chicanas/os arrived back to Los Angeles with a transnational cultural politics through the concept of "autonomy" and "autonomous organizing". This chapter continues tracing the emergence of Chicana/o autonomy and autonomous organizing, or what I call Chicana/o urban Zapatismo in Los Angeles, California. It shifts our attention from the early focus on solidarity to that of a complex web of Zapatista-inspired cultural production, cultural politics, and autonomous organizing in Los Angeles. I argue that the early 1990's articulation (as discussed in Chapter 2 and 3) of "hopelessness and fear" that was prevalent in urban barrios also produced what autonomist Marxists have called "precarious subjects" (Federici, 2006) or in this case, migrant, unwaged, underemployed, racialized Chicana/o youth, that re-organized themselves in unique ways different than prior generations of Chicanas/os. Using the cultural production of art, music, and activism, as a means to transform their daily lives, these racialized precarious subjects pursued a Zapatista-inspired cultural politics that responded to the lack of opportunities,

denied access to education and other structures of power, the male-centered hierarchical nature of political organizations and collectives, and the growing corporate nature of art, music, and activism. Their re-organization also tells a different story tied to their focus on developing community self-determination, collectivity, and direct democracy. From out of the shadows, these Chicana/o urban Zapatistas are producing a cultural politics around the concept of "autonomy" and "autonomous organizing that is in tune with the ongoing changes in indigenous communities in Chiapas as well as those in the barrios and ghettos of Los Angeles. This chapter discusses how this process has evolved from the performance and cultural work of early Chicana/o urban Zapatismo to the shift towards community building through the recuperation and creation of "commons" in Los Angeles, California. The umbrella network, the Autonomous Peoples Collective, is an articulation of the type of community building pursued by Chicana/o urban Zapatistas in Los Angeles, California. It serves as an important example of the type of autonomous organizing operating in barrios throughout Los Angeles, California.

PRECARIOUS LABOR , THE ZAPATISTAS, AND CHICANA/O CULTURAL WORKERS

The influx of millions of migrants from Mexico, Latin America, and Asia to Los Angeles during the last thirty years has served as a disposable and expendable workforce for the new flexible economies of the global city. (Bales, 1999; De Genova, 2002; Chin Yoon Louie, 2001) These new flexible forms of production or what is referred to as the post-fordist forms of production, are extremely different from the prior forms of industrial production that served millions of working class Chicanos, African Americans, and whites. They are fragmented and discontinuous and are absent of full time job security and workers benefits. Filled by a mostly immigrant, many times undocumented, work force, these new forms of production have been the site of new and innovative

forms of worker resistance and labor recomposition. Womens garment worker organizing for better wages and working conditions, service workers in hotels and other industries demanding full time wages and benefits, and janitorial unions protesting similar issues are examples of the types of responses this new labor force has produced in response to the post-fordist form of production. On the other side of the spectrum, the precarious nature of these new forms of production is weighted against the high number of unwaged and underwaged people who traditionally have fallen within the interstices of these forms of production.

Chicana/o youth, and youth of color, in particular, have been the source of innovative forms of resistance against the racialized exploitation of the educational school system and their continued criminalization by the police. Chicana/o youth have responded not only through their participation and creation of horizontal and direct democratic collectives and organizations but also through their creativity as cultural workers.

Their precarious labor holds many caveats and contradictions. On the one hand it is a possible source for the production of new political subjectivities that are resisting the traditional forms of labor exploitation in the workplace by creating cultural responses to the material conditions they face. On the other hand, they can easily create new forms of production for capital to exploit. In the case of Chicana/o youth who in the early 1990's became politicized by the growing precarious movements of migrant workers demanding better living wages and working conditions in Los Angeles and the anti-racist movements that followed the 1992 Los Angeles rebellions, their precarity produced new and innovative ways to express cultural affinity and political solidarity with struggles throughout the world.

In the case of their solidarity with the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico, their articulation of the current phase of neoliberal capitalism stems from their precarious position as criminalized and racialized youth within the changing barrios of Los Angeles and their distrust of the professionalization of activism within social justice movements. As Chapter 3 has noted, Chicana/o youth critiqued not only the material conditions they faced in their neighborhoods through their work with the new labor movements their parents participated in, but also questioned the hierarchies and dependency embedded in Leftist political organizing. Zapatismo as it was resonating throughout the world, found important allies in Chicana/o youth who found resonance in the Zapatistas answer to these important concerns and issues.

ZAPATISMO URBANO

> The Zapatistas of Chiapas do not give us a model that we can apply to our part of the struggle, but we see their forms of struggle as an inspiration for the development of our forms of struggle. In that sense we can speak of the spread of Zapatismo to the cities, the development of an urban Zapatismo, for which the EZLN is not a model but a constant point of reference (Holloway, 2006: 168).

> It's often said that diverse movements in Mexico and other parts of the world have seen in Zapatismo an example of struggle and even that some have taken up its principles to build their own resistance. We say: to those who follow our example, don't follow it. We think that everyone has to build his and her own experience and not repeat models. In this sense, Zapatismo offers a mirror, but a mirror that isn't you, it just helps you see how you are, to comb your hair in a certain way, to fix yourself up a little. We say, look at our mistakes and achievements--if there are any--the things that can serve to build your own processes. But don't try to export Zapatismo or import it. We think that the people have enough courage and wisdom to build their own process and their own movements, because they have their own histories. This should be not only welcomed, but encouraged (Interview with Sub-Comandante Marcos by Gloria Munoz Ramirez, January 16, 2004).

In his essay, "*Zapatismo urbano*," John Holloway (2006) analyzes the political resonance of Zapatismo and the Zapatistas with struggles in urban areas throughout the globe. Here, Holloway develops the concept of "*Zapatismo urbano*" or "urban

Zapatismo" as a question: "What is this resonance in the city? Is it an imagined or real resonance? What are the differences between the city version and the countryside version?" Each of these questions offer different answers for different urban areas depending on the life experiences and histories of communities living there.

Finding commonalities between different reactions to Zapatismo, Holloway argues that there are two distinct reactions to the Zapatista indigenous movement in the city. The first corresponds to the tremendous amount of solidarity urban groups and individuals have organized for the Zapatistas. This is symbolic of the growth of international Zapatista solidarity networks and organizations after the Zapatista uprising (Olesen 2005). While this traditional method of offering solidarity is an important part of the Zapatistas' survival, it offers very little in terms of the proposals the Zapatistas are making to communities and individuals throughout the world.

The second reaction, on the other hand, insists on finding the commonalities that intersect between the struggles of Zapatista Indians in Chiapas, Mexico and the different struggles of those living in urban cities like Los Angeles, California. As Holloway reminds us, "here it is not a question of solidarity with the struggle of others, but of understanding that the Zapatistas and we are part of the same struggle." (Holloway, 2006: 168)

For Holloway, this is a question of "resonance". For example, several of the themes that Holloway proposes that resonate in the city are the "mere fact of rebellion" or a "politics of rebellion," the rejection of "revolutionary vanguardism" or "state-oriented reformism," "the rejection of the party as an organizational form," and "the rejection of power as an aim. " The first of these themes, "the politics of rebellion," is centered on the Zapatistas taking up arms and rebelling at a time when resistance and armed rebellion were largely thought to have passed their prime within revolutionary thought and

practice. Of course, in the city it is unlikely that one will rebel and take up arms like the Zapatistas did on January 1, 1994. But urban rebellion is not outside of the popular imaginary of marginalized communities, especially in Los Angeles. What it is perceived lacking for those communities in the city is a way to move forward with the courage to rebel so that like the case of the 1992 Los Angeles rebellions, it does not lead to their reliance on a party or politician to tell them how to proceed. In this regard, Holloway contends, "the world around us makes us scream, but where do we go with our scream, what do we do with our scream?" (2006).

The Zapatista politics of rebellion also reflects their use of the slogan, "caminando preguntamos" or "walking by asking." The concept of "caminando preguntamos" is another way of saying direct democracy. For the Zapatistas, the critique of the Mexican old left and its inability to have an answer for the basic needs of communities opens the space for direct democratic engagement between new political subjects that attempt to move forward together with no set path or map besides the engagement with one another. This leads to a process where we are constantly asking sets of questions that we hope will chart our next step or path. This process resonates with the struggles of people in the city who also feel disconnected within the formal democratic process provided by the growing Latino political class.

It also speaks to the last three themes that resonate in the city: The Zapatista rejection of "revolutionary vanguardism," "state-oriented reformism," the party as an organizational form," and the rejection of power as an aim. The resonance here is the types of organizational processes communities must engage in, in order to not replicate the vertical hierarchical organizational styles that dominated social struggles in the cities for decades. The Zapatistas' use of the slogan, "*mandar obedeciendo*" or "leading by obeying" speaks to the resonance of horizontal, democratic, and consensus organizing

models that historically have emerged throughout urban struggles. These struggles are not so much focused on winning a seat during the next city council elections or becoming the party that represents a certain struggle in the city, but instead it seeks the incorporation, cooperation, and participation of everyone to exercise their power in a horizontal and participatory democratic way towards articulating the needs and desires of communities in struggle. The question is how does this relate to the emergence of Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o activism, art, music, and community organizing in a metropolitan city like Los Angeles, California?

Chicana/o Urban Zapatismo

Following the political trajectory set forth by John Holloway, I offer the term Chicana/o urban Zapatismo, as a way to highlight the specificity of Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o and Latina/o activism, art, music, and community organizing in places like Los Angeles. The term offers insights into the diverse and creative organizing styles produced by Chicanas/os that are focused on furthering direct democracy, horizontal consensus decision-making models, collective practices of mutuality and reciprocity, and the building of trans-local, regional, national, and global networks. But what is different about Chicana/o urban Zapatismo that the generic use of the term "urban Zapatismo" does not offer? The answer to this question is not about finding fault in Holloway's concept but rather furthering the applicability of the term by investigating the local nuances and tendencies of urban Zapatismo in the context of the lives of ethnic Mexicans and Latinos in Los Angeles.

Chicana/o urban Zapatismo, in this case, contextualizes the political and cultural response, scream, and vision of a particular community composed of many communities throughout the greater Los Angeles area. The transition of this region into a "Latino

Metropolis" composed of a majority immigrant racialized ethnic Mexican and Latino population, produces new political subjectivities that are forged from the transnational process of migration and the re-territorialization of these groups into urban barrios and enclaves throughout Los Angeles. The end result of this transnational imaginary between Los Angeles and the sending communities of this growing population redefines what a Chicana or Chicano identity means in the city. Countless youth, in particular those who are not Mexican American but are first generation or recently arrived immigrants to the United States, are disrupting prior notions of Mexican American identity that would have one choose between the Mexican or the American and instead they are re-conceptualizing their identity as "both/and," which is inclusive of difference, flexible, and fluid forms of identity formation (Viesca, 2004).

I use Chicana/o urban Zapatismo to focus on Chicana/o and Latina/o activists, artists, musicians, community organizers, educators, farmers, vendors, etc. who are inspired by Zapatismo as a political and cultural politics, but who also participate in a locally grounded political process that contests the structural mechanisms that produce a sense of "hopelessness," "despair," "loneliness," and "fear" so commonly felt by youth of color during the 1980s and 1990s in Los Angeles. This distinguishes Chicana/o urban Zapatismo from other forms of urban Zapatismo because what resonates so clearly from the Zapatistas is their critique of neoliberal capitalism and racism, among other –isms, that other urban Zapatista projects might not necessarily thread in their organizing. By contesting the power relations that produce social inequalities in the barrios of Los Angeles, Chicana/o urban Zapatistas are attempting to craft alternatives to the sentiments of "hopelessness" and "despair" that grew during the 1980s. This has led to the production of new and innovative terrains of struggle that are not based on a specific

identity politics, but instead a politics that threads many issues and concerns simultaneously (Widener, 2008).

This is a crucial step in the evolution of a Chicana/o urban Zapatista politics, a politics that attempts to be as fluid and flexible as possible, since it opens the doors to a plurality of experiences and approaches that each have their own alternatives and visions of what type of Los Angeles they want to create. The emergence of a renewed Chicana/o cultural scene inspired by the Zapatistas and the participation of Chicanas within Chicana/o urban Zapatismo offers a unique case study to the cultural politics that are produced through Chicana/o urban Zapatismo.

A Renewed Chicana/o Cultural Scene in Los Angeles

> Why is it that even when there is next to no other constituency for revolutionary politics in a capitalist society, the one group most likely to be sympathetic to its projects consists of artists, musicians, writers, and others involved in some form of non-alienated production? Surely there must be a link between the actual experience of first-imagining things and then bringing them into being, individually or collectively, and the ability to envision social alternatives – particularly, the possibility of a society itself premised on less alienated forms of creativity? (Graeber, 2002)

Carlos picks up trash from the side of the freeway with a garbage bag in one hand and a long wooden pick in the other. He coughs a couple of times from the exhaust of passing trucks and cars speeding by in excess of 70 MPH. Will waves to Carlos to come in and take in some of the shade of a small tree on the side of the road. The summer heat makes it almost unbearable for Carlos, Will, and the rest of the teenage youth dressed in neon orange vests. They often make fun of their outfits, "We look like cons! And we get paid like them, too!" The outfits resemble the clothes of prison inmates in California and the conditions are only a notch above those in the prison. During the 1980s, many youth of color like Carlos and Will were employed by the Los Angeles Conservation Corps

(LACC) at minimum wages and with no health benefits or chances for advancement within LACC. The 2000 youth employed yearly by the LACC, worked on cleaning up roads, parks, and government office buildings throughout town. Although the corps work did not pay much, employment for youth was limited to these federally funded programs albeit at low wages. Youth of color looking for good paying jobs in Los Angeles found them in the much riskier and dangerous economies of the drug trade. Even then, most youth who resorted to selling drugs did not make the type of money that Hollywood movies portrayed them as accumulating. Instead, youth of color in Los Angeles remained an underemployed population with very little aspirations for upward mobility.

As money for the LACC grew thinner due to the downsizing and dismantling of social services, workers within the LACC and several local directors started to openly critique the huge gap in salaries between the workers and the administration of the LACC. They began discussing the possibilities of unionizing the workers of the LACC. Victor Viesca (2004), writing on their organizing, adds that these youth were "demanding union representation, better wages, benefits, and the opportunity for advancement for corps youth". Several of the directors that supported the youth efforts complained that the youth were not getting the proper training or help necessary for them to pursue better paying skilled jobs. In 1995, in response to the organizing, LACC administrators fired one of the main directors and supporters of the youth out of the Emergency Resources Building in downtown Los Angeles. The youth countered with the takeover of the building until their demands were met. The takeover would be known throughout Los Angeles as the battle for the Peace and Justice Center. For twelve months, the Emergency Resources Building became the Peace and Justice Center, a site for a rejuvenated youth cultural arts and education movement.

Organizing out of the Peace and Justice Center, the original Latino and Black youth that protested the firing of their local director transformed their office building into an arts and music space where workshops on art, graffiti, music production, DJ'ing, and dance were given to the broader Los Angeles community. Concerts by local bands were scheduled weekly at the center with multiracial bands such as the Black Eyed Peas, Ozomatli, and Quetzal playing and practicing regularly with each other.

The center was also a place for youth of color to organize with each other and discuss the effects of racism, economic exploitation, and sexism by organizing political and cultural events and workshops that were pluri-ethnic and focused on a broader sense of social justice through the arts. Viesca (2004) contends,

> The Peace and Justice Center was a vital space for collective political mobilization, a repository of social memory about past struggles for social change, and a site for imagining and enacting new social relations in the era of globalization. The multiracial politics of the center emerged from young people's shared experience of racialization and class and spatial location in Los Angeles since the 1970s. Chicana/o activists and artists did not deny their ethnicity in creating a space that would foster interethnic coalitions, but rather drew on their cultural identities to reposition their struggle as connected to other marginalized groups.

Although the center closed in 1996, its impact would spur an emerging Chicana/o art and music scene in Los Angeles, California.

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The political resonance of the Zapatistas in Los Angeles is symbolic of an emergent Chicana/o art and music scene in Los Angeles. Victor Viesca (2004), writing on this art and music scene, contends:

> The very conditions of oppression and disenfranchisement that characterize the new economy have enabled (and required) a particular counter response, a response that is necessarily different from older forms of struggle. The Eastside scene is both a product of and a means for countering the impact of globalization

> on low-wage workers and aggrieved racialized populations. The Eastside scene serves as a floating site of resistance, a mechanism for calling an oppositional community into being through performance.

Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o and Latina/o artists, musicians, and musical groups in particular have been at the forefront of this "floating site of resistance" in Los Angeles. Since their interest in the Zapatistas began after the January 1, 1994 uprising, Chicana/o artists, musicians, and musical groups have supported and in some cases initiated Zapatista solidarity efforts in Los Angeles, California. This has not gone unnoticed by the Zapatistas or their spokesperson, Sup-comandante Marcos, who in several communiqués has thanked such groups as Rage Against the Machine, Aztlan Underground, Quetzal, and Ozomatli.[26] Stemming from face-to-face encounters with Zapatista communities, many of these artists, muralists, and musicians have found a creative resonance in Zapatismo through their lyrical and poetic communiqués, communications, letters, and political actions. As one Chicana artist who uses the Zapatistas in her paintings reminded me, "some of the most intense poetry that spoke to me as a young Chicana came from the compas in Chiapas. The Zapatistas made it creative to be creative, if that makes any sense." In this case, Chicana/o urban Zapatismo's connection to the arts, music, and creative forms of expression is this new vocabulary coming from Chicana/o youth who feel that prior cultural movements like the 1960s Chicano movement had grown stale and tired with internal political battles over power, dogmatic views over political organizing strategies, hierarchical methods of structuring movements, and isolating male-centered identity politics that are ethnocentric, sexist, and homophobic.

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[26] In a February 1999 communique titled, "To Musicians all over the World," Sub-comandante Marcos includes a brief list of both Mexican and international music groups who have supported the Zapatistas over the years. Rage Against the Machine and its lead singer Chicano Zack de la Rocha, the hip-hop punk Chicano indigenous group Aztlan Underground, the East LA music group Quetzal, and the Los Angeles-based and Grammy award winning band Ozomatli.

Muralists and Graffiti writers, like the Los Angeles native, Nuke, traveled to Chiapas and worked on several murals in San Cristobal de las Casas and in Zapatista communities, including collaborative mural projects in the Aguascalientes (early Zapatista political and cultural centers) of Oventik and Morelia. Other contemporary artists like Oscar Magallanes traveled to Chiapas as part of peace delegations and found the encounters with the Zapatista communities life changing and transformative. Oscar, an artist who works with wood instead of canvas, attended an Estación Libre delegation to Chiapas in 2005. Oscar was inspired by many of the images he saw during the delegation and having the opportunity to witness first-hand Zapatista autonomy and autonomous organizing and the use of art within Zapatista communities. The Zapatistas reflected his own depictions of working-class dignity in the everyday lives of day laborers, fruit stand owners, ice cream vendors, and farm workers. Oscar states, "Most of my art is about the Los Angeles everyone forgets. It's about the people forgotten. *Un Los Angeles rebelde y digno*. It's also about love and dreams. Because these people are often left without dreams or love." Both Nuke and Oscar represent a grounded cultural politics and through their art they are making certain histories and experiences visible to broader audiences and communities.

Marisol Torres also uses multiple mediums, including canvas, print, wood, and paper mache, as her artistic expression. Marisol is a member of a number of Zapatista-inspired collectives in Los Angeles and an active member of the Xicana/indigena women's multimedia group, Mujeres de Maiz; co-founder of the comedy theatre group Chusma; the women's performance group, Las Ramonas; and a member of the women's drumming group, In Lak Ech. She is also a native of East Los Angeles and one of the original members of Big Frente Zapatista which coordinated the 1997 Zapatista/Chicano cultural encounter in Chiapas, Mexico. Like Oscar, Marisol uses images that capture the

everyday life of native women and men. She uses Zapatista images and *dichos* in her paintings and sculptures. Many of these paintings, prints, and sculptures are sold only at other Zapatista-inspired events like the El Puente Hacia La Esperanza "Anti-Mall." Along with her partner, Pepe, who is a master wood carver and founding member of the Xicano/Native punk hip-hop group, Aztlan Underground, they use art as a means to sustain themselves but also as a teaching tool.

Most Zapatista-inspired artists and musicians incorporate popular education as part of their cultural expression. Many of them are teachers, mentors, tutors, or work in fields related to education or social services, where they work directly with populations that are in desperate need of resources and help. This inherently shapes their politics and their cultural production as artists and musicians. For instance, Martha Gonzalez and Quetzal Flores, members of the Chicano musical group Quetzal, have taught traditional dance, music writing, and musical instrument classes to elementary level children, high school youth, and university students.

The teaching of traditional art and music is also a key facet of Chicana/o urban Zapatistas cultural production and identity formation. Musical groups such as Quetzal, Ozomatli, Quinto Sol, and Aztlan Underground, take their group names after indigenous names. Stemming from a long tradition of cultural identity recuperation, these musical groups are continuing the reaffirmation process that began during the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s in Los Angeles. While during the Chicano movement, embracing an indigenous past fueled the cultural renaissance of the movement and cemented a Chicano political identity, a political connection to contemporary indigenous cultures and communities informs the day-to-day interaction with new transnational indigenous communities that have made Los Angeles their home and a hemispheric connection between Chicana/o artists, activists, and musicians with indigenous and Afro-Latin

groups throughout the Americas. These two processes of acknowledging the past and identifying with the present, has expanded the political and cultural meanings of a Chicana/o identity.

Besides redefining a Chicana/o identity, these art and music groups are also collaborating with each other through city-wide gigs where they perform side by side, offering each other support and expanding the cultural scene by offering a cultural experience that is made up of many sounds and artistic mediums. As Victor Viesca argues, compilation albums between Chicano musical groups not only provide a snapshot milieu of the musical scene but also demonstrate the collective nature of these groups and the politics embedded in their music and in their interpersonal relationships. This has resulted in Chicana/o urban Zapatista art and music groups creating their own art collectives, spaces, studios, and record labels. Such multimedia collectives as Xicano Records and Films, created by members of the Chicano band, Aztlan Underground, include filmmakers and musicians that capture the essence of this cultural scene in Los Angeles.

The politics of the emerging art and music scene also corresponds to the relationship between Zapatista-inspired artists and musicians and their conscious effort to engage their audiences through art and music. Basing their critiques on a cultural production that has become "voiceless," "apolitical," "corporate," and "elitist," these artists and musicians attempt to make their craft accessible and real to their target audience. For example, Olmeca, is a solo hip hop MC who uses his music as a way to invite his audiences into an encounter with each other. In this way, Olmeca facilitates and participates in discussions with his audiences not only through his music but also with a concerted effort at working politically and culturally with the groups, collectives,

and places he visits and performs. Olmeca talks about his relationship with his audiences in this way:

> I learned from the EZ that we can create *encuentro*s everywhere. That not only are the audiences listening to my music, seeing themselves in the lyrics, joining me in some form of rebellion, but they are also asked to participate after in an *encuentro*. So they can meet each other and talk to each other. At first, I had people be like, I came for a show, I didn't come to talk or to meet people, but then we started meeting and people expressed their anger and hopes, and they started organizing with each other…I travel all over the place and in each place that is a big part, the process, the *encuentro*.

Olmeca, who went solo after years working with bands such as Slowrider, grew up in East Los Angeles, although his parents moved frequently between Jalisco, Mexico and the United States. For Olmeca, Zapatismo is directly connected to the experiences of ethnic Mexicans and people of color in Los Angeles because it accentuates the creativity and vast spectrum of expressions within Mexican Los Angeles that according to him, "is an art", "an act of rebellion" that allows disenfranchised groups to find common ground in their difference. His experiences are different than many Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o musicians and artists. Having one foot in Mexico and the other in East Los Angeles placed Olmeca in the middle of two distinct worlds and experiences. Tying the lives of Mexicans in Mexico and those of immigrants and people of color in Los Angeles, California has been a major part of Olmeca's current musical production. I asked Olmeca how his upbringing differs from other musicians:

> We are all different. It's not like we are competing with our music. It's about bridging them. Remembering those that came before and connecting with those who are playing now. It's like, how can I explain it? I take from my personal, family, and communities experiences. They are always in my music. I like putting them in conversation even if they don't talk to each other sometimes. I like putting my Mom and Dad in conversation with those minutemen racists and see how hypocritical and racist these groups can be to my parents who are talking about just living and working…I put the activist who comes and gives a dope talk to fools like me, in conversation with youth like me when I was young so that the

> activist can see that we got something to say too. That comes out in my music and lyrics. It's a challenge but that is part of Zapatismo. The challenge.

This politics of bridging experiences is similar to what the Xicana/indigena drumming group, In Lak Ech, suggest through their group name. As Felicia, one of the collective members, comments:

> In Lak Ech, is Maya for, "*tu eres mi otro yo*." It speaks to our many dualities and reflections that each of us are to one another. When we treat each other like this, in an interconnected way, we are obligated to walk with each other because we are a reflection of each other…No *pos*, how many times do we go about our daily lives not seeing each other in others. Our *colectiva* of *mujeristas* wants our native ways and songs to reflect our realities and our ancestors. Past, present, and *futuro*.

Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o artists and musicians are embracing the very meanings of the saying, In Lak Ech, in their art and in their music, but most of all in their relationship with their audiences and with the different communities with whom they identify.

Chicana urban Zapatismo

> If the global justice movement is to pose a truly radical alternative to the system, it must challenge not just who holds power in this current system, but the very nature of power as well. Central to that challenge must be an understanding of how power interfaces with gender (Starhawk, 2004).

At the forefront of Chicana/o urban Zapatismo in Los Angeles is the role Chicanas, Latinas, and other Women of color are playing within collectives, organizations, spaces, and art circles. Resisting the effects of neoliberal capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy and homophobia on the lives of women of color and critiquing the internal organization politics and a lack of gender analysis within movements, Chicana urban Zapatismo emerges as a crucial and binding terrain of struggle within Chicana/o urban Zapatismo. Their role within Zapatista-inspired activism, art, music, and community organizing is a reminder to Chicano urban Zapatistas that building autonomy

is susceptible to the same power differences that their Chicano movement predecessors found to be fragmenting.

Chicanas quickly identified with the Zapatistas following the Zapatista uprising. Images of Zapatista indigenous women soldiers, having important leadership positions within the uprising, initially inspired Chicanas and Latinas with a renewed sense of revolutionary fervor, not witnessed since the Central American guerrilla groups of the 1980s. Moreover, spokespersons such as the Zapatista Comandanta Ramona, a petite Indigenous elder who was responsible for the takeover of San Cristobal de las Casas, became iconic figures for women throughout the globe.

As the world became more and more aware of the Zapatista model of including women within their military ranks and within their civilian decision making structure, Chicanas found resonance in Zapatista women's response to centuries of male-patriarchal power in their daily lives. The Zapatistas, unlike other revolutionary groups, incorporated these important critiques by women into their organizing with the "Zapatista Women's Revolutionary Laws," but not without a fight from many Zapatista men, (Appendix I). Chicanas saw the revolutionary laws as an attempt by Zapatista women to dismantle the patriarchal structure of their daily lives. It reinforced their own desires to create communities and pursue an autonomy that included the dreams, visions, and participation of women without the oppressive restraints of hetero-normative patriarchy. Mixpe, a Chicana feminist artist, and part of the Chicana performance troop, Las Ramonas, discusses this point in greater detail:

> What good is autonomy, if we as *mujeres* are still talked over in meetings, or not seen as doing anything. When I worked in the Zapatista *Caracol* of Morelia, I worked with the *mujeres* in the community, on projects. I asked them how things had changed since the uprising. They used to tell me, "We [as women] have a greater say in things. We aren't left out. If one of us gets *golpeada* (battered) by our husbands, we don't have to be quiet." When they would tell me this, I used to

> think of how we treat each other in LA. How we treat each other at meetings, or at events, or even on a personal level. That is one of the biggest issues in our *comunidad*, domestic violence, against *mujeres*, our elders, our young. There is a lot we can learn from the Zapatistas, but we shouldn't have to go thousands of miles to see where we need to change. I used to be hard core about calling out men, and it's not like I still don't but now we've developed as *mujeres* different ways of confronting men and women on their shit. We now have reflection as part of our process…This, I always think of as autonomy.

For Mixpe, a strong criticism of how Chicana/o organizations and collectives continue to be dominated by men and recreate forms of internal violence that eventually fragment social struggles is a reminder that women are attempting to transform the nature of these spaces through methods and processes that both confront these power dynamics at their core but also situate a politics of reflection as a crucial aspect of organizing towards autonomy.

Diana, a Chicana lesbian artist living in Highland Park who attended one of Estación Libre's people of color delegations to Zapatista communities, shares Mixpe's analysis and adds her experience as a Chicana lesbian:

> Part of what my art speaks to is the response to the heteronormative values that our gente believe strongly in. My *arte* shows the other side, the side that isn't talked about at our dinner tables or our political meetings because it makes men and women uncomfortable…the Zapatistas spoke to me because of their rebel hearts, their spirit that breaks so many barriers but I'm not naïve, I know they have their *pleitos*…I always wonder whether after the Zapatistas came out, if indigenous women and men also *came out.* On the delegation that I went on…I asked the *compas* whether queer *compas* were free to come out and if they were accepted. They kinda looked at me like they didn't understand the question and I looked at the people of color on the delegation and they kinda looked at me the same. But I asked again, "*y que lugar tienen las mujeres y hombres que son gay?*" They were like, "*Si, ellos tienen lugar, pero no tenemos en esta comunidad gente gay.*" I wanted to follow up and say, "How do you know?" but I refrained. I think their response spoke a lot to me because it showed me to not romanticize a struggle but see it as a long process that we must all travel if we believe in social justice.

Chicana urban Zapatistas like Mixpe and Diana are de-romanticizing the Zapatistas as *the* model to emulate and follow. Instead they are demanding that Chicanas and Chicanos who are working on social justice chart their own path and process, while along the way, reflecting on each step taken as part of that "long process."

Besides attempting to change the dynamics within political organizations and collectives, Chicana urban Zapatistas also created their own autonomous spaces to pursue their art, music, activism, and spiritual energies. Oftentimes, chastised by men for building their own spaces to discuss issues facing women, these Chicanas offer Chicana/o urban Zapatismo an example of how to build autonomy and self-determination with very little resources. Important to building these autonomous spaces is the construction of social networks that reach out not only across neighborhoods or regions but connect with other radical women networks across the globe. For instance, La Red Xikana Indigena, is a network of Chicana and indigenous women throughout the Americas that work on issues of human rights for indigenous women and communities by lobbying the United Nations for indigenous rights throughout the globe. Other collectives and networks include Women Image Makers, a collective of women who work on multimedia, audio, and video production with a focus on women, youth, community building, and Queer LGBT groups.

Such multimedia groups like Mujeres de Maiz for instance are collectives of women artists, poets, filmmakers, photographers, writers, workers, mothers, sisters, grandmothers, who have different levels of education and come from different life experiences. Each member of Mujeres de Maiz connects her different experiences and social networks with other members to produce an expanding network of women cultural workers who are using their art as an "educational tool for resistance, healing, and change." Founded by Felicia Montes and Claudia Mercado, the Mujeres de Maiz

collective, for instance, was formed in 1997 out of the Zapatista-inspired organizing space, the Popular Resource Center/Centro de Regeneración. Out of the PRC, Mujeres de Maiz collective produced several music CD's, poetry Zine's, short films and documentaries, and art exhibits on the Chicana/indigena experience. Over the last ten years, Mujeres de Maiz has performed at community centers, universities, political actions, and festivals throughout the United States and in countries across the world.

Connected with the Mujeres de Maiz collective, the Chicana music and poetry group, In Lak Ech, provides audiences a spiritual activism that is often neglected and overlooked by organizations. By offering Chicana Indigena songs and drumming, In Lak Ech is breaking gender specific roles that prefigure men as fulfilling the roll of traditional indigenous drummers. Their music is both inspiring to young women who also perform musically throughout Los Angeles and a metaphysical autonomous space to heal and regenerate from the many wounds and battles women encounter in their daily life. In Lak Ech is also a spoken word collective that uses the Zapatista slogan of "our word is our weapon" to share the cultural sensibilities and hopes of Chicana indigena womyn in Los Angeles with audiences across the country.

Other examples of Chicana urban Zapatismo include political satire theatre groups like Las Ramonas. Named after the Zapatista Comandanta Ramona, who led the Zapatista forces in the takeover of San Cristobal de las Casas and who became a symbol of Zapatista women's participation within the Zapatista struggle, Las Ramonas use political and cultural satire to show the humorous side of serious political and social issues facing communities of color throughout the city. For instance, one of their first skits produced critiqued the Hollywood film, Beverly Hills Chihuahua, which depicted in its movie trailer, a Chihuahua dog speaking in a stereotypical Mexican English on top of an Aztec pyramid. In response, Las Ramonas filmed their own music video against the

film, calling the production, "Chihuahua in a Box." Dressed in Punk outfits and playing drums and guitars, the trio of Chicanas ran around East Los Angeles trying to free a Chihuahua from her owner, played by Martha Gonzalez, the lead vocalist of the musical group, Quetzal. The music video was a response to the racist boxing in of cultural stereotypes by Hollywood on Mexicans and Latinos.

Chicana urban Zapatismo is an important facet of Chicana/o urban Zapatismo in Los Angeles, California. It fissures a politics that is not only focused on centering Chicanas and other women of color within oftentimes male-centered spaces. It also understands autonomy and the pursuit of autonomous spaces as a valuable source of transformation and reflection for Chicanas to organize out of. In turn, Chicana urban Zapatismo makes clear and innovative political and cultural contributions that critique racist and sexist tendencies within Chicano/Mexicano/Latino culture and US society as a whole.

CHICANA/O AUTONOMY AND AUTONOMOUS ORGANIZING

> The struggle for autonomy seems to be but the new name of an old notion of power: people's power, exercising unprecedented impetus in its contemporary forms at the grassroots (Esteva and Prakash, 1998:42).

> Autonomy isn't new to our people. Ricardo Flores Magon organized not too far away from here in East LA. The Magonistas believed in community, in building community across fronteras. The Chicano movement also attempted to do this. We thought of self-determination during the Movimiento because we were tired of bad schools, police abuse, our youth going into an unjust war in Vietnam, and our families working like mules in the fields. That's what many of us saw in Aztlan. The opportunity to find out who we were culturally and change it politically. What we didn't have that we see now, is a deeper analysis, a deeper connection to other struggles, so that we know we are not alone in our fight. You know, Pablo, it's hard to move away from fear, fear of being deported, fear of being arrested, fear of being kicked out of your apartment, fear of living. The Zapatistas shared with us their fears and offered hope as a way out. It just took us some time to realize we had it all along. (Interview with Miguel P. from Estación Libre Los Angeles)

The new millennium brought a series of opportunities and challenges to Chicana/o urban Zapatistas in Los Angeles, California. The "loose activism" that characterized much of the original Zapatista-inspired solidarity and activist work quickly solidified after the August 1997 encounter between the Zapatistas and Chicanas/os from Los Angeles. Chicanas/os returning from Chiapas embraced a working notion of autonomy and autonomous organizing that they fashioned to the realities of barrios and communities throughout Los Angeles, California. The art, music, and culture they produced came with a working analysis of how their art connected to the communities they lived in and how it could easily be co-opted and privatized. As they started working on defining what autonomy meant for their communities, these Chicana/o urban Zapatistas mapped what it was, wasn't, and could be in their neighborhoods or in their lives. They refocused their energies on recuperating and creating places to practice autonomy and (re)build community bonds. This became a central theme in the battle for commons in Los Angeles, California.

Autonomy as the New Commons

The continued participation by Chicana/o urban Zapatistas in the growing networks of alterglobalization movements emerging against the most recent forms of neoliberal governance further articulated what thirty years of new social movements and social actors have embedded as effective tactics organizing against neoliberal capitalism. These tactics include expanding, blending, and re-articulating prior notions of circulating struggles. The internet and other forms of communication have made it possible for social movements to intersect and find new forms of solidarity with one another. (Cleaver, 1998) Inspired by as the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, these struggles are

creating a vast web that intersects a pluriverse of experiences and histories. (Esteva and Prakash, 1998)

Autonomy becomes not only the local response to the most recent articulation of capital accumulation and racial subordination but a globally linked movement with other autonomous projects. While prior notions of autonomy were focused on the workplace and the manner workers sought to define their own interest against exploitation, (Cleaver, 1993; Cleaver, 2000) the emergence of new social movements in the 1990's brought about new political actors that were not necessarily tied to the industrial factory.

Sylvia Federici describes these new social movements as breaking from the old confines of the traditional workplace as the site of struggle. For Federici, "we now see a kind of struggle that goes out from the factory to the 'territory,' connecting different places of work and building movements and organizations rooted in the territory." (Federici, 2006) In this case, the "territory" resembles what current social movements call the struggle for commons and against enclosures. By "commons" and "enclosures" I am engaging a political discourse that is emerging out of the contemporary *alter*globalization movement. (Notes from Nowhere, 2003; De Angelis, Winter 2003; De Marcellus, 2003) This movement made of many movements is well known for its alternative visions and global resistance against the intrusions and enclosures of neoliberal capitalism on the daily lives of local communities, indigenous populations, and marginalized people throughout the world. These *alter*globalization movements include but are not limited to the struggle for water rights in India or Bolivia, the struggle for food sovereignty in South Central Los Angeles, the struggle for indigenous and Afro-Latino rights in Latin America, the struggle against gentrification and for affordable housing, or the struggle for universal health care. These movements also share a common political discourse: the recovery and construction of "commons".

At its core, the concept of "commons" refers to alternative spaces that are non-commodified and are not subjected to the market form. Recuperating commons is usually misunderstood as the ends of a particular struggle. The recuperation of collective lands, civil rights and privileges, etc., are examples of this perspective. While preserving and recuperating our commons is a goal of especially the alterglobalization movement and the Zapatista movement in general, these movements are prime examples of working ***through*** commons and not solely ***for*** commons. In this case, commons do not need to be tied to physical space but instead offer a way for "communities in resistance", which are made of horizontal social networks working towards mutuality and solidarity, to articulate alternative means to the prevailing logics of capital and race. (De Angelis, Winter 2003) Under this perspective, the political vision of those trying to recover commons is with the intent of building "communities in resistance". The argument made by the alterglobalization movement is that neoliberal capitalism has been the largest threat to the well-being and livelihoods of communities who (attempt to) practice alternative forms of social relations that are not solely based on the market or on other hierarchical value systems.

Enclosures, on the other hand, are the antithesis of "commons" and "communities in resistance." They are as social scientist John Holloway contends, "those strategies promoted by global economic and political elites that "commodify" things and, in particular, turn the powers of doing, of labour, into a commodity, a thing." (Holloway, 2002) Such strategies include the privatization of public services, the displacement of local communities for the purpose of creating greater market opportunities, the cuts to social welfare programs, or any strategy that pushes populations and communities to depend more and more on the market form. (Midnight Notes Collective, 2004) Capitalist enclosures in this case only create a context for market social interaction to occur. The

end result is the creation of markets within these enclosures in order to integrate their activities in a system that pits all against all.

The concepts of "commons," "communities in resistance," and "enclosures" are not new to Chicano communities. In fact, the field of Chicana/o Studies is grounded in a political discourse of "commons" and "communities," as a terrain of analysis and research. The research on the recuperation of land grants in New Mexico, the struggle for Chicano studies in the high school and in the universities, the research on Chicana autonomous organizing during the Chicano Movement, and the battle against draconian state propositions in California, all are examples of Chicana/o Studies using the concepts of "commons," "communities in resistance," and "enclosures" to investigate the responses by racialized ethnic Mexican and Latino communities in the United States to a century of marginalization and exploitation.

Chicana/o urban Zapatista artists, musicians, activists, and community organizers began searching for permanent spaces, instead of the mobile spaces they were accustomed to operating out of, as the final process towards autonomy and autonomous organizing. This was with the intent on constructing autonomous projects that reflected the outcomes and discussions of the roundtables during the August 1997 encounter in Chiapas, Mexico. Not all of these spaces were directly inspired by the Zapatista movement but most were closely connected to Chicana/o urban Zapatistas.

Co-founder of the Zapatista-inspired autonomous space, the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE, in El Sereno, California, Roberto Flores calls this transition from solidarity to autonomous spaces as part of an interwoven set of relationships and forming politics throughout Los Angeles that Chicana/o urban Zapatismo has embraced as part of their organizing. This politics he sees as the work of the spider, the bee, and the ant. For Roberto, the work of the spider is to create local, (trans)local, regional, national, and

international webs or networks. These webs and networks can represent the inter-community networks that exist within a given neighborhood. For example the social mutual networks that exist when a neighbor needs help with day care or when someone needs a mechanic and doesn't have sufficient money to pay for an expensive chain store mechanic or auto repair shop so they ask someone who within the neighborhood who has knowledge on how to repair cars to help them in return for a mutual service. On the other hand, the (trans)local networks go beyond the visible community and extend to other communities for the same type of mutual help and solidarity. This is a symbolic marker of the "Latino Metropolis" as "transnational communities" are now more than ever spread out throughout the urban landscapes of Los Angeles. Scholars who study the everyday practices of "transnational communities" do not only trace the transnational currents of these migrating populations but also their trans-local connections with other communities throughout cities and regions. (Gutierrez, 1998; Alvarez, 1995; Stephen 2007; Kearney, 1995) These trans-local networks involve the mobility of groups to meet and share resources with one another. This includes families traveling to the other side of town to visit extended family members or to pursue the services of people within a given community that their community might not have. For instance traditional healers, medicine men and women, cultural dance teachers, etc. Chicana/o urban Zapatistas use these local and trans-local networks to mutually help each other find work, build solidarity around specific community issues, expand the scope of a particular issue to more communities, coordinate cross-city alliances, and give each other more opportunities to perform for broader audiences. The regional, transborder, and international networks work along the same lines except they are harder to maintain in terms of face to face interactions. These networks perform multiple tasks for Chicana/o urban Zapatistas. They connect the struggles of communities in barrios throughout Los

Angeles with for example, the struggles along the US/Mexico border, Mexico City, Chiapas, and Palestine. Although these networks might involve at some point face to face encounters, they operate primarily through the use of the World Wide Web. Harry Cleaver, writing on the use of the Internet within the Zapatista solidarity movement, suggests that this new method of encountering one another through email list serves, websites, and other forms of virtual communication, is symbolic of an emergent international web of struggle. (Cleaver, 1998) For Chicana/o urban Zapatistas this means participating in regional and international social justice networks in order to coordinate their local actions with other groups across vast amount of space. It also means continuing the work of organizing work brigades and peace delegations to Chiapas or to Cuba or Venezuela and participating in global encounter like the 1996 Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism in Chiapas, Mexico.

The work of the bee, on the other hand, consists of spreading the ideas that resonate from the Zapatistas to as many places as possible. These ideas are expressed through the different Zapatista slogans that form their cultural politics or Zapatismo. By "pollinating" ideas around concepts of direct democracy, consensus, autonomy, self-determination, non-violence, social and racial justice, throughout different communities in Los Angeles, Roberto Flores contends, Chicana/o urban Zapatistas are encountering similar echoes from within local barrios that also express these ideas and that eventually form markers of solidarity within distinctly different communities. This bee work is mostly a discursive process between Chicana/o urban Zapatistas and the communities they are in dialogue with. Such examples as attending the workshops/presentations that Estación Libre or Casa del Pueblo gives all over Los Angeles (and across the country) once they return from their delegations to Chiapas, or even the lyrics sung by local bands influenced by Zapatismo such as Quetzal, Ozomatli, Olmeca, Aztlan Underground, and

even the internationally acclaimed rock group Rage Against the Machine, are all examples of the type of bee work that exists in Los Angeles.

The last type of work identified by Roberto Flores is the work of the ant. This type of process is the quiet work done in grassroots local community organizing. This could include the establishment of autonomous spaces (i.e. Eastside Café and Casa del Pueblo), the housing cooperative organized by Casa del Pueblo, the popular education ESL classes, immigrant rights workshops, and politically conscious open-mic hip-hop nights at the Eastside Café. This could also include something as simple as going door to door and engaging the local residents surrounding the autonomous spaces and inviting them to get to know the space and use it. The work of the ant is the most challenging aspect of contemporary Chicana/o urban Zapatismo in Los Angeles, California. The difficult task of building strong reliable and long lasting community ties with neighbors, shop owners, and other community members has to do with the reliability and accountability between Chicana/o urban Zapatistas and the communities that they work with. Most Chicana/o urban Zapatistas agree that what they are trying to break away from is the "loose activism" that is so prevalent in progressive, radical, and grassroots organizations where the majority of the people working within the organization or collective are "outsider" activists who do not live in the communities that they work with. This is a crucial critique of Chicana/o urban Zapatismo that is not so simply answered by bridging the divide between the community owning the space and it being a majority activist space. At times the work of the ant will be mostly activists who will work hard to make sure that these autonomous spaces are running and that they exist or that certain community issues or concerns do not disappear. Other times, the work of the ant is to create the spaces necessary where horizontal relationships can exist and where community members can feel that the space is theirs and that they are an integral part of

the space's development and growth. In both cases, the goal is to create long term relationships that recover, defend, and construct commons and build stronger community bonds.

The work of the spider, bee, and ant, are crucial elements of contemporary Chicana/o urban Zapatismo. They foreground the transition from solidarity to a multiple set of tasks and projects focused on "autonomy" that Chicana/o urban Zapatistas perform locally, trans-locally, regionally, and internationally.

THE AUTONOMOUS PEOPLES COLLECTIVE

APC members block the expressway adjacent to the South Central Farm
(Source: www.southcentralfarmers.com)

The morning of June 13, 2006, dozens of Los Angeles Sheriff's Department and Los Angeles Police Department officers stormed the fenced in and locked gates of the South Central Farm, a 14-acre urban garden in South Central Los Angeles. They carried

with them riot gear and several tools used to dislodge and unlock farm supporters who had chained themselves in concrete blocks and to several Oak trees on the garden. Word quickly spread of the farm takeover through word of mouth, an intricate and complex phone and message tree, alternative media channels, and the use of a text message service that farm coordinators used to update people on the farm struggle. These same information and solidarity networks were responsible for one of the city's largest solidarity efforts in decades. From the immigrant rights movement to the environmental justice movement to the alterglobalization movement, the spectrum of people and communities that converged on the 14-acre farm, articulated in the construction of a movement of many movements.[27]

Of the hundreds of people that arrived to protect the farm, members of the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE, Casa del Pueblo in Echo Park, Estación Libre Los Angeles, El Puente Hacia la Esperanza, Copwatch LA, South Central Farm Support Committee, and Centro Cultural de Santa Anna participated in spontaneous actions of civil disobedience by sitting down in the middle of the streets that paralleled the farm, and momentarily stopping extremely busy and industrious city street traffic from passing. They eventually were removed by force, tied up and moved to a corner of the farm, waiting for their arrest, by the armed police presence that had moved in to evict the dozens of farm supporters inside the South Central Farm. The members of these collectives and organizations all were a part of a trans-local network of Zapatista-inspired autonomous spaces called the Autonomous Peoples Collective, or APC for short. The Autonomous Peoples Collective is the focus of the final section to this chapter. It involves investigating the transition from solidarity to building autonomy and

[27] The news on the South Central Farm struggle spread through a maturing alternative media network that includes such collectives as www.Indymedia.com and www.Narconews.org

autonomous spaces in Los Angeles, California. The example of the umbrella network, the Autonomous Peoples Collective, will provide various examples on how Chicana/o urban Zapatistas visualize and construct autonomy in Los Angeles, California and how they relate autonomy to their everyday lives.

From Solidarity to Autonomy

I asked Olmeca, a Chicano Hip Hop artist and member of Estación Libre Los Angeles, about the transition from solidarity work to the focus on local organizing in Los Angeles during an editing session to his most recent album, *Contracultura*. Working on mixing a wide range of beats and samples with his lyrical rhymes of social justice and community building, Olmeca explained:

> Zapatismo is a starting point. Not *the* starting point, but one of many. When we think of autonomy in LA, we used to think of taking up space. Like the Peace and Justice Center in the late 90's or the South Central Farm or like the Eastside Café, or Casa Del Pueblo. Places where we can come together from wherever and create whatever we want. A safe space to create rebel music, rebel art, rebel poetry, things like that. An act of rebellion. Zapatismo helped us understand why we should get together and work out our shit. Nothing is ever set in stone here in LA, yet people are always livin' like they know what the end result is. The day laborer know he or she must work, but the ability to find a *jale*,(job) and not get caught by the ICE, now that is an art. Zapatismo helped us rethink our relationships to each other, what it means to be Mexican in LA, so that it includes all people of color and to look at our communities as different and not the same.

Many of APC's members that I worked with had a college education and worked in the non-profit or social service industries. This proved vital because, they had first-hand knowledge of the growing bureaucracy and difficulties in non-profit work and in institutionalized social justice work, but also because they filled a different segmented population that serviced many of the vulnerable populations in Los Angeles. This chasm between class segmented groups of ethnic Mexicans and Latinos becomes one of the sites

where urban Zapatismo has changed drastically. Gerardo, a social worker and homeless peoples activist, explains:

> The mentality es que no one wants to work with ellos. No one wants to work with homeless people or with imigrantes. And if they do, they want to take control and lead. Los invitan a las meetings and tell them what they have to do. They don't even listen to them, con respeto.

I asked, Gerardo, who he was referring to. He replied:

> Los politicos, la policia, los que want them out. And that is what my bosses ask me to do on a daily basis, go through the line of people and treat them without dignidad.

Gerardo, followed his explanation with a telling description of how Zapatismo and the idea of autonomy has changed the way he approaches his work and how he participates in different grassroots struggles.

> Working with the Autonomous Peoples Collective (a network of various self-identified autonomous collectives and individuals throughout Los Angeles) has helped me to change the way I relate to everyone. En ves de give a homeless family five minutes and then push them out, I help them find a place and give them all the services I can. I also invite them to participate in events and give them information on what to do if they are harassed by the policia or la migra. These are things other social workers would never do or that they ask us not to do. I've seen some of the families I've helped at the English classes at the Eastside Café or work on one of the garden plots at Proyecto Jardin. They now participate in the collective meetings and are a part of a community.

Eddie from Casa Del Pueblo articulates this transition he along with others went through, from working on Zapatista solidarity projects with Comite Zapatista de Los Angeles to local projects in Los Angeles with Casa de Pueblo in Echo Park during a formal interview in 2006:

> Eddie: from 98, when I graduated from SDST. To 2000 or so I kinda was out of the loop on a lot of things, and still trying to figure out what was next in my life. I decided to pursue graduate school, right after graduate school. *Phone Rings! 'Casa del Pueblo, si, hey Mercedes que tal, como estas, claro que si. Aha..no si v aver junta. Ok. Bye bye.'* I'm telling you people are trying to cancel the meetings.

Especially since it is getting cold and dark. I understand. As long as they call. So, uhm, with the grad school and stuff, I kinda began to having that desire to implement one of the main principles of the EZLN and that is to walk with the community consistently. And gain the trust of the community and go into a community that you never been to and talk to them and work with the project, and create a space, because there weren't a lot of space, and create a space to organize with. And in some point create a self-sufficient project, and all these ideas were being thrown, and so I and four other people that did Zap solidarity work, we did a caravan in 2001, a last minute caravan through some friends in Mexico city who were in LA at the time and uhm after that caravan those people that went and helped organize that, I didn't go on that caravan but I helped organize it. We started to talk about forming a study group, a Zapatista study group, and we would meet at café luna or different places like , and from the study group, one of the companeros, posed a question, "can we take it a step further, can we be serious and build a community space and sustain it?" and to me it was like "oh shit, that is big time right there!"

Pablo: was there any precedent for that? Were there other spaces like that?

Eddie: we used to have our meeting at floricanto, we learned a lot from them. We had long talks with them at floricanto. And uhm, one of the members that helped start floricanto joined our group, and then one brotha from DF, he was part of some anarchist groups in DF, and people just kinda started meeting. Comite Zapatista we were organized as them, we did support group awareness but on the side we would meet at a person's house, we would dialogue about what would be Casa del Pueblo, and we called it that because it was more like a pueblo work. And we continued to do solidarity work with Atenco, the first time in Atenco. Solidarity work with the encuentros. And any call out from the EZ we would do that work too.

I continued probing on Eddie's answers and asked about his work with Casa del Pueblo and the idea behind it in Echo Park and how it first started:

The people who helped were amazing people. I learned a lot from them. And one day, things just started rolling. I met with Father David from the Methodist church. I asked him for support, how we can find support. And he said he would consider it. "Well you guys can have the keys to the basement, and we could work out of there." And we kinda thought we wanted to be on our own and so we worked out of there for a while, we had an office space there. What he did was connect us with other folks in the community and some progressive liberation theology folks in Pasadena, and they were interested in the project and they wanted to know more. They wanted to know the realistic and unrealistic aspects of the project, and they were like "hum… ok. How would you afford this" and my

> homeboy threw out the idea of a co-op, and they were like, "we really like the co-op idea, we really like the getting away from the charity idea. We like the empowerment of the people of immigrants. We like that." We will consider funding you. And we were like "what?" And they were like "we will give you 10 thousand dollars, no strings attached, what do you think of that." And you guys can demonstrate that you are capable of growing, and if you grow, we will consider giving you more money. When more money is needed. So we wrote a proposal. I dint know how to write a proposal, not those kind of proposals. And we all wrote the proposal. And we never heard from them. Eight months passed and we didn't hear from them. And we thought we had something going. And Comite Zapatistas dissolved in 2002, it just kinda of like, people got burned out, from the solidarity work. Just when people were bouncing from that we got a call from a man who was still wanted to support the project. And he said, "hey man, congratulations, we are giving you 10 g's." and I was like "what?" And I called a whole bunch of folks, and I literally we were just starting to get disconnected more and more, but that brought us together, the funding. Not everybody but a lot of people. And I remember meeting at the Lafayette community center, and this compañera that worked there let us in on Sundays. And we would meet and ask, we have 10g's what will we do with it. And people were like we need to be smart, and not just spend it. 10 g's is a lot of money but not a lot for the project we wanted to do. And then, right away, we developed, community components, or commissions. I remember the early phases, we broke down to 3 components: political, economic, social/cultural. The political had local and international attached to it. The economic had a political to it because it had an awareness, then you had the co-op component. And we wanted to do a *tiendita*, fair trade exchange with the coops in Mexico with some of my connects. And then we were going to do our store. That was our initial stage. And the cultural stage was as a cultural space to organize and celebrate. We had a lot of people, but many that were not fully committed, they were committed but the kind that would come and go.

Although initial seed money helped bring people back together in Eddie eyes, it did not create the type of commitment and relationship the early members of Casa del Pueblo were envisioning the space in facilitating. For Eddie and other Casa members, the project was to be self-sustaining and community oriented. Activists were not going to be able to sustain the space for a long time unless community members were involved in the process of building it from the ground up. Maria, another founding member of Casa, recalls these early discussions on Casa del Pueblo:

> Early on we talked a lot with each other. We read a lot and thought of so many ideas. We thought how would the Zapatistas do this, what model could we apply. But we didn't get far with this because, well we knew that we wanted to create our own model, with the community, not as an imposition. A lot of this came from the fact that we were doing work with cooperatives and communities in Chiapas and we couldn't tell them what they wanted so how could we do that here in our own neighborhoods. So we said, "we need to connect with the community, the people who live here. And I'm not saying that activists don't have homes, but the moms and pops of the community." And we started, we did a campaign at the time, an incuesta/survey on what moms and pops store owners, churches, schools, people from the community, parks. We did surveys on what issues are affecting the community, what would you like to do about them, how would you like to get involved, stuff like that. Well housing was a big issue. Well clearly, the local was housing. We knew international we were connected to so many struggles. We connected with third world struggles and the local was the housing issue. And we began to learn about housing. We began to do awareness against anti-evictions. And we asked people if they wanted to know about their rights we would do workshops on tenant rights, and we did that for like six months.

The housing collective would turn out to be one of the main projects of Casa del Pueblo. Weekly meetings were held at their new location on Glendale in Echo Park, centralizing their operations to their community members. The space attracted community members and neighbors who were being evicted from their homes and apartments and through the space, they were able to create a base of people to demand tenant's rights and contest evictions throughout Echo Park. Autonomy in the case of Casa del Pueblo develops from the political analysis that activists alone could not run a space and that community involvement and direction was needed in order for there to be effective change in communities like Echo Park.

Laura P., founder of El Puente Hacia La Esperanza, the collective of vendors, artists, co-operatives, and musicians who are promoting "conscious consuming" in Los Angeles, California discusses El Puente's mission statement in the following way:

> The difference is that el Puente is not trying to become an organization. It's a group with a commitment to promote a vision; which is different; promoting conscious consuming; promoting people before profit; promoting, not just being

> an "artivist" or activists, but having your activism reflect in what you eat, what you wear, what you decide to promote yourself as. We live in a society, unfortunately, where, we don't live in a native community where everyone dresses the same and makes their own clothes. We have power in what we wear and how we wear it. So our goal with el Puente is to promote that. It's not necessarily to become the organization but to promote. And I remember seven or eight years ago, eight years ago, when we first started the anti-mall, it was nothing like it. Our biggest competitor was SHG (Self-Help Graphics), that was a big competition, and now eight years later, I know of nine or ten different sales. And I have people calling me that there are other sales that are calling themselves anti-mall. And actually it doesn't bother me. It doesn't bother me that they call themselves the anti mall as long as they have a similar vision that "we are not going to support big corporations" or sweatshops. We are going to promote co-ops, we are going to promote the small businesses. If they did that then "cool" everyone could call themselves the anti-mall. The problem is that it doesn't happen that way.

Laura, in her description of El Puente and the growth of such conscious consuming events as the "anti-mall" acknowledges the feeling of wanting to take ownership of the idea, but instead she shies away from the competition between other similar events that have similar visions. For Laura and the rest of the women who make up the day to day organizing for El Puente, the spreading of sweatshop-free conscious consuming, is a sign that autonomy and autonomous organizing is reaching different communities in Los Angeles, California. The appearance of different "anti-malls" throughout the city is also an indicator of a growing movement towards supporting and expanding alternative economies. I asked Laura about the idea of the "anti-mall," and how long it had been around. She responded:

> Laura: The anti mall, eight years. The very first one we had was in the driveway of Martha and Quetzal's (Martha Gonzalez and Quetzal Flores from the East LA musical group, Quetzal) house and it was a backlash to the Self-Help Graphics sales.
>
> Pablo: because they were working how?
>
> Laura: well here I am doing this coop, and I wasn't making any money, so when I would sell it was because people were offering me to sell their stuff. And all the

> money would go back to the coops. So Martha and I were talking about it and I was going to have a table with her at SHG. The table was, and this was just eight years ago, a hundred dollars for two days. And it was a small table but it wasn't offered to me, even if I had the money, it wasn't offered to me. I wasn't an artist with a title, all recognized and stuff. Versus Martha, they were asking her to participate. And so she said we should have our own sale. And she was the one who came up with the idea of having something at her house. She came up with the name for it. This was eight years ago and stuff like Jarocho music hadn't blown up yet in LA. Everybody didn't carry a jarana and shoes, so we had a fandango, and it was great musicians. It was Gabriel (Gabriel Gonzalez, Martha's brother), you know Gabriel, and from Domingo Siete, it was Quetzal, it was Los Pochos, it was all that crew. And Martha's mom made aguas, and I think Martha sold tostadas and I think we had twelve vendors. A lot of people showed up. A lot of people. It became word of mouth. We didn't even have a flyer. And the whole idea was, "nosotros somos el anti mall." Martha and I became talking about what was the difference between this sale and the other sales, and we started discussing the mission statement and vision. This is what we want to do and this is how we want to do it. But it's been very helpful to have people like Martha and Quetzal who back us up as the anti mall because they provide entertainment throughout the years. People show up to see them, so sometimes people would show up to see Da Brat, because it was a Chicano/Chicana band from "back in da day", their classics. They might have no idea about conscious consuming or about locally grown food from the South Central Farm, or about buying their lotions from someone in the neighborhood. So to me it is always interesting because some people just show up to see the artists, or for one specific anti maller, and then they would get the idea and vision of the anti-mall.

Xochitl, a founding member of the self-identified autonomous space, the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE in El Sereno, makes this point clear, "I think if we don't have a space we will continue working towards autonomy or autonomously, como sea. It's just that with a space, we can practice autonomy, and have place we call our own, at the same time."

SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the term, Chicana/o urban Zapatismo, as a political subjectivity that is forged from the contestation of the material conditions faced during the 1980s and early 1990s by Chicana/o youth in Los Angeles and the political resonance

found in the Zapatista indigenous movement of Chiapas, Mexico. Denouncing and organizing against the racial, economic, and social discrimination they faced in the barrios of Los Angeles, Chicana/o urban Zapatistas used art, music, and performance to create a cultural politics focused on the recuperation of cultural identity and political self-determination. As the previous chapter charted, the impact of the 1997 cultural encounter between the Zapatistas and Chicana/o artists, activists, and community organizers resonated in an explosion of Zapatista-inspired cultural expression by Chicanas and Chicanos in Los Angeles, California. Through art, music, and performance, Chicana/o urban Zapatismo bridged and made symbols and ideas of resistance accessible to wider audiences and promoted "new ways of doing politics." These "new ways of doing politics" followed horizontal power relations in opposition and in contrast to previous vertical models of organizing within the Chicana/o Left. For Chicana/o urban Zapatistas, a new politics centered on their understanding of Zapatista cultural politics also questioned the male-dominated art and political scene by demanding that political and cultural spaces offer a gender analysis as part of their political transformation and process.

As the political resonance shifted from a need to support the Zapatistas to one of building extensive political and social networks, Chicana/o urban Zapatistas went from political/cultural solidarity efforts and cultural production inspired by the Zapatistas to form collectives that organized locally around the concept of autonomy. Autonomy and autonomous organizing, in this case, became the recovery of local and virtual spaces or "commons" for Chicanas/o to politically organize out of or build stronger connections to the communities that surrounded them. They sought physical spaces in barrios throughout Los Angeles in which to organize and build stronger ties to the communities that surrounded them. By doing so, they formed strong trans-local, regional, and national

networks that supported different types of autonomous projects in barrios across Los Angeles. The case of the Autonomous Peoples Collective (APC), for instance, is an example of the type of umbrella networks that developed around the idea of Zapatista-inspired autonomy and autonomous organizing. Organizing around homelessness, housing rights, community economic self-determination, and police brutality, the collectives that make up the Autonomous Peoples Collective are connected by their insistence on community building, autonomy, and self-determination. One of these Zapatista-inspired autonomous spaces, the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE (Educational Cultural Health Organizing Space), will be the focus of Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 5

The Eastside Café ECHOSPACE

Picture of the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE in El Sereno, California

> The (re)construction of community bonds has, therefore, been a central concern of the movement in the cities. The construction of social centres or alternative cafes, the coming together of people, in informal and changing movements create new patters of community and mutual trust which are part and parcel of the development of councilist forms of organization (Holloway, 2006: 172).

This chapter shines an ethnographic spotlight on the self-identified autonomous space, the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE (Education, Cultural, Health Organizing Space) in the community of El Sereno. Here, the discussion on Chicana/o urban Zapatismo and autonomy focuses on the tensions between the internal and external social relations that are produced and naturalized by the racial, social, political, and economic order of the region, and the alternative social relations the Eastside Café attempts to produce through

their everyday interactions with the individuals and collectives that make up the Eastside Café, and the larger El Sereno community.

El Sereno, California

The community of El Sereno, California has an estimated population of more than 43,000 people. This estimate is higher than the 2000 US census data which calculated El Sereno's population at 40,954 people living within a 4.1 square mile radius. Of the 43,000 people that live in El Sereno, 81.7 percent are Latinos, 11.3 percent are Asian, 4.9 percent are white, 1.7 percent are Black, and 0.9 percent are Other. In terms of household incomes, the majority of families living in El Sereno make between $20,000 to $40,000 annually. Educational attainment shows that a large majority of El Sereno residents have either a high school education or less than a high school education. In terms of industry and housing, El Sereno is mostly a residential area with many families owning or renting homes. The few industries that are in El Sereno are indicative of a longer corridor of industries throughout the greater eastside of Los Angeles. These industries include auto mechanic shops, metal factories, some low-technology factories, and small neighborhood shops and services.

In terms of social and racial landscapes, if one were to drive from the mostly Chicano and Latino barrio of Boyle Heights (commonly referred to as East Los Angeles) towards the ethnically diverse working-class barrio of El Sereno, just east of Boyle Heights, where Soto Street merges into Huntington Drive, past the crowded intersections of Cesar Chavez and into the northwestern hills of the San Gabriel valley, one might notice a change in the social and physical landscape, revealing El Sereno's interstitial and gateway position into the more affluent, enclosed, and predominantly white communities of South Pasadena and San Marino to the east and the Asian corridor city of Alhambra to

the south. From the street name changing from the Spanish Soto Avenue to the Anglophone Huntington Drive, the small but significant changes one may notice on a casual drive from the Mexican and Latino Eastside (this includes El Sereno) towards the mostly white San Gabriel Valley are considerable if we determine historically that Los Angeles, more than any metropolitan and global city is fashioned around the historical separation of communities based on race, class, and social status. As Mike Davis points out,

> Some years ago when South Pasadena was still lily white, the city fathers decided that the twain must never meet and engineered the barricading of busy Van Horne Street. It may not be the old Berlin Wall, but to those on its "bad side" it insultingly stigmatizes their neighborhood as a violent slum. Serenos were especially incensed when South Pasadena justified the street closure in the name of "preventing drive by shootings." Since many older Chicanos tell bitter stories of harassment by the South Pasadena police, it is not surprising that they regard the barricade with the same fondness that Black southerners once felt about segregated drinking fountains (Davis, 2001:72-73).

Popular culture presents similar depictions of communities of color in Los Angeles on a regular basis. Movies, TV shows, billboards and advertisements, daily news reports, and corporate sponsored newspapers bombard society with images of an uncontrollable inner city crime wave of Blacks, Mexicans, and other racialized groups waiting to move in on the perceived homogeneity of middle-class and predominately White neighborhoods. More telling are the sheer political, economic, and social differences that separate the Greater Eastside of Los Angeles and its majority ethnic Mexican and Latino (from Central and South America) population from the gated and highly protected enclaves of the San Gabriel Valley and Pasadena areas.

Having separated and ensured that property taxes in their neighborhood would not go towards the development of mostly communities of color in Los Angeles, many gated communities just east of El Sereno and the Eastside of Los Angeles separated from the

city of Los Angeles decades ago and instead manage their own resources and taxes. For instance, the gap between median home values in the blue-collar barrio of El Sereno versus that of South Pasadena is astonishing. South Pasadena homes, with restrictive and racist real estate covenants that keep the number of families of color buying homes limited, are at least, according to Davis, one hundred thousand dollars more than those just blocks away in El Sereno (2001). Having seen these homes on occasion, I would suggest that the discrepancy is much larger; there exists at least a two to five hundred thousand dollar difference in prices, even with high rent and real estate values on homes and apartments in El Sereno and other barrios.

These "lily white" communities, as Mike Davis calls them, are also deeply conservative and are often the epicenter for racist anti-immigrant and anti-affirmative action legislation and activism. Even though the "Orange Curtain" or Orange County to the south, is the prime example of White neo-conservative communities in Southern California, the affluent neighborhoods of the San Gabriel valley and the Northwest part of San Fernando Valley to the north are hotbeds of racist activism like the Save Our State[28] coalition and more overtly White supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the Minutemen militia. Yet the racial paranoia that these groups consistently foment in society, only accentuates the much larger and everyday forms of institutional and systemic racism and economic exploitation that exists throughout the city of Angels. A short ten minute drive from East Los Angeles is all it takes to see these inequalities.

[28] A California statewide anti-immigration/immigrant group that surfaced in the early 1990s at the height of recent anti-immigration sentiments.

Local businesses adjacent to the Eastside Café Echospace in El Sereno

Driving down Huntington Drive, in El Sereno, right on the city border of South Pasadena and Alhambra, off of Huntington and Maycrest avenue, if you look to your left, you will find a corner building with a series of small storefronts selling everything from furniture to party favors to carpet fabrics. Among these storefronts, one is clearly out of place. The outside mural highlights the name of the establishment, "Eastside Cafe." Most people that pass by the small "hole in the wall" believe it is an actual café that sells coffee to the nearby community. They are surprised to learn that coffee and pastries are not sold at the Eastside Café. Instead they find a large "EZLN" Zapatista flag, a picture of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and politically Left, posters, flyers, banners hanging from the stucco walls of the inside, along with fold-out chairs and tables, and a small plug-in radio. When talking about the lack of coffee offered at the Eastside Café, co-founder and longtime Los Angeles Chicano community organizer Roberto Flores jokingly offers

"mental mochas" instead. Indeed, the Eastside Café is part of the growing trend throughout urban cities across the globe that call themselves "alternative cafes," in reference to the meeting and gathering spaces that café's have traditionally offered for groups and individuals. Usually claiming to be self-sustaining and autonomous, these "alternative cafes" are a radical reincarnation of the traditional community center or organizing space. Most do not receive money from foundations nor are they considered non-profit organizations with 501-c3 status. They are usually rooms in inexpensive buildings, squatted houses, buildings, or open lots. They are maintained by a collective of people who take care of the space, keep it clean, and make sure it has the basic necessities for its survival. In this case, the Eastside Café is but one of several Zapatista-inspired "alternative cafes" in Los Angeles, California. From May 2005 to December 2006, I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork with the Eastside Café Echospace in El Sereno, California.

My First Encounter with the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE

The first time I stepped foot inside the Eastside Café was a week after I arrived to Los Angeles in May 2005. My future roommates, Olmeca, a radical hip-hop MC and former member of Slowrider, a Zapatista inspired Chicano hip hop and rock band, and Mixpe, a Chicana writer and educator with the local Indigenous school Academia Semillas del Pueblo, sublet me their apartment in El Sereno until they arrived back from working in Chiapas as Estación Libre co-coordinators. They mentioned that if I was really here to work politically on Zapatista-inspired autonomy, then the Eastside Café was the place to be. Before they left for Chiapas, they told me that the Eastside Café was having one of their many monthly open houses to the El Sereno community. This included screening films, face painting for children, and a day full of workshops on *son*

jarocho music by musicians that performed at the Eastside Café. The Eastside Café was only a 10 minute walk from my apartment, so I headed down Huntington Drive east towards Alhambra and South Pasadena. On Maycrest and Huntington, right before the El Sereno/South Pasadena/Alhambra borders, stands a series of local shops that includes a furniture store, a carpet store, a barber shop, a party favor shop, and a liquor store frequented by local winos and vatos looking to score. The Eastside Café ECHOSPACE is nestled between the carpet store and the furniture store. Some time earlier, a local artist, Jose Ramirez painted the Eastside Cafe in a deep purple color. Jose had offered to paint the front of the Eastside Café in his very well known style of Chicano art but forgot to make the Eastside Café sign in a color bright enough for people to see driving on either side of Huntington Drive. Jose was a member of a collective of artists who worked out of Self-help graphics in East LA. His art was very much inspired by the Zapatista movement and by what he saw as the changing landscape of East LA.

Jose and his brother Omar would help on occasion with fundraising for the Eastside Café by producing various art pieces and several silk screens that could be sold to pay for the perpetually late rent. I used to think, "How can the Eastside Café, and for that matter other self-identified autonomous spaces like *Casa del Pueblo* in Echo Park, claim to be "autonomous" if they paid rent every month?" I soon realized that "autonomy" in LA did not mean solely "squatting" on open spaces, although there were many of these spaces in LA, but that it meant being able to operate out of these spaces without the state, private corporate sponsorship, or philanthropic foundations. In the case of the Eastside Café, every month the coordinating committee would literally pass the collection plate to people using the space in order to pay not that month's rent but the previous month. Later, as I oriented myself more to the Eastside Café, I helped with

organizing a more formal sustainer program where projects running out of the Eastside and individuals working out of the space would donate twenty or so dollars each month.

As I walked into the space, I saw dozens of people sitting around a series of fold out tables throughout the 700 or so square foot space. The walls were painted a marigold color and the floors were made of dark marble cement. Hanging on the walls were several signs that read, "US out of Iraq" and "Stop the expansion of the 710 freeway". A flag of the EZLN hung just to the right of the entrance and a Mayan deity was painted on the wall immediately to the left. Towards the back of the space, there was a huge 12 x 12 graffiti piece on wooden panels in dark grey and black spray paint by a famous graffiti artist, Nuke of East LA. Nuke also worked out of the Self-Help graphics space and was widely known as one of the best graffiti artists in LA. He was also known for the many murals he helped paint in various Zapatista communities over the years. The most well-known of these murals is on the side of the autonomous clinic in Oventik Chiapas. This mural was painted during the 1997 First Zapatista and Chicano Cultural Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism. This encounter is referenced in Chapter 3 as the watershed moment for the participation and formation of Chicana/o urban Zapatismo in Los Angeles. Close to two-hundred Chicana and Chicano artists, musicians, and activists, mostly college aged students with working-class backgrounds arrived under the umbrella collective, the Big Frente Zapatista. They attended the week-long encounter in August of 1997 and participated in various workshops and roundtables with thousands of Zapatista men and women from the surrounding communities of Oventik in the Altos region of Chiapas. Discussions over art, music, culture, issues concerning the Zapatista Women's Revolutionary Laws, and, of course, autonomy led to collective art and music pieces that were shared after every panel and workshop. The Chicanas and Chicanos

who participated in this encounter would later use this collective process of working to produce in LA what the Zapatistas called "arte en rebeldia".[29]

The piece that Nuke painted for the Eastside stayed near the back of the Eastside Café. It depicted a gloomy almost post-apocalyptic image of Los Angeles with images of skeletons rising from the smoke stacks of factories in and around the Eastside of Los Angeles. On the floor, in front of the mural was a large wooden tarima and stage. This was used frequently for the *Jarana* and *Son Jarocho* classes that took place on Tuesdays and Saturdays. The tarima was also used for several monthly *fandangos*, a community gathering of musicians and dancers that practice the Afro-Mexican Son Jarocho musical and cultural tradition. These *fandangos* were infamous for running into the wee hours of the night. I remember later on, having to close up the Eastside Café during some of these fandangos between *Jaraneros* (Son Jarocho musicians) from East LA, El Sereno, and Santa Anna and having to wait hours before they stopped playing. Every time they stopped playing, more *jaraneras/os* came and started up the *fandango* again.

During this particular open house, several Eastside Café members were serving food to local residents from the neighborhood and others were painting children's faces with different floral designs. I gravitated to an empty table and sat down. Some music was playing from a small boom box next to the bathroom in the back of the room. I recognized the voice of Martha Gonzalez on the tracks and knew it was a CD of local East LA music group Quetzal. What I noticed in my time in East LA was that the art and music scene that was very much inspired by the Zapatistas was another tightly knit network that "autonomous spaces" like the Eastside Café would use to fundraise or bring different communities together. Here community represents "difference", where

[29] The 1997 First Zapatista and Chicano Cultural Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism is discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation in greater detail.

"difference" would come together in spaces to share and "convivir" with each other. For example, imagine a gig with Aztlan Underground and Quinto Sol from Xicana/o Records and Film, local Chicano MCs Olmeca, formerly of Slow rider, and El Vuh, Cihuatl Tonalli, an all women collective of musicians, and to close Quetzal. This lineup would definitely bring diverse artists and communities together -- from *rockeros* to punk rockers to Chicanos who grew up listening to these bands perform to the out of place but still recognizable Chicano yuppy.

Soon after I sat down, Beto sat next to me and started asking me if I was new to the neighborhood. Roberto Flores, known as Beto by his friends, is a long time activist from Oxnard, California and the co-founder of the Eastside Café Echospace. A former *campesino* labor organizer, member of the Chicano moratorium organizing committee during the 1970's in East LA, and "card carrying member" of the communist party, his personal trajectory towards Zapatismo and "autonomy" speaks to the inter-generational aspects of "autonomous organizing".

I answered Beto's question by saying, "Yeah, I am new to the neighborhood. Olmeca and Mixpe asked me to come by since I am taking over their lease until they come back." We quickly started talking about our experiences in Chiapas and how he actually didn't remember being one of the main reasons why I first went to Chiapas over seven years ago. I began telling him the story of how I had met him in Mexico City during the 1998 NACCS (National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies) conference and that he had invited me to go to Chiapas. As we continued talking, Beto described to me the Eastside Café and how the space hosted various events such as art exhibits, poetry readings, punk and Ska band performances, English classes for people in the community, and political organizing around various issues. He mentioned how a symbol of the Eastside Cafe's respected place by many in the community was the fact that

it was not "tagged" by local gangs or "crews". In urban areas where there is a high amount of perceived "vandalism" and graffiti writing, certain places and walls are sometimes not touched because of their place in the community. For instance, images of the Virgen de Guadalupe and murals that depict the struggle of Chicanos and Mexicans in Los Angeles are usually not tagged.

The inviting nature of people, like Beto, who volunteered their time at the Eastside Cafe, had me coming back often to help with events and to plan even more activities out of this non-alcoholic, drug-free space. Beto mentioned that the coordinating committee of the Eastside Cafe met every two weeks on Sundays and that I was more than welcome to come and participate. I often frequented the meetings since they were an amazing space to just listen and observe how the coordinating committee, comprised mostly Chicanas and Mexicanas, worked on a consensus model and shared a dynamic that clearly had formed after years of organizing together.

Although, the Eastside Café was a safe space to organize and participate in community events it was also difficult to initially enter and become part of the political arm of the Eastside Cafe. The Chicana/o activist scene in Los Angeles, California can be a treacherous terrain to walk through if you don't have proper "credenciales". These quasi-barrio passes are either earned or awarded to men and women activists depending on who one had worked with, where one had organized, how one had been politically active, and what type of organizing work one had participated in before. The importance of prior organizing and activist experience in addition to my own political commitments was essential to facilitating my entrance as a researcher committed towards social justice and change. Of course, there are other factors that mark one's entrance into a broader community, for which the greater Eastside of Los Angeles and other minority enclaves throughout Los Angeles have socially sworn by. These include getting "taxed" by the

local enforcers of community boundaries (neighborhood gangs, police, the "ghetto bird" or police helicopter flashing its lights on your apartment or vehicle, and even local community members). Although there are different forms of being "taxed" in communities of color for men than there are for women, in this case, I clearly remember my first six months in El Sereno being asked "What barrio or set are you from?" and for the first two weeks I was in El Sereno, my car alarm went off daily between the hours of 7-8 am. I later found out that it was no freak of nature phenomenon but a way for local community members to see who owned this "outsider" vehicle. They would trigger the alarm on my car to see if I would come out and check if it was being vandalized. Such encounters were not new to me being raised in the greater East Bay of Northern California, specifically the urban barrios of Berkeley, Richmond, and San Pablo, California.

Chicana/o activists in the "Eastside" grew up with these methods of enforcing the borders of who came and went into communities of color. This is as much a positive aspect as it is a negative one. On one hand, the social web or net that exists in communities of color in Los Angeles is such that everyone is responsible for protecting and ensuring that certain elements do not enter their community. On the other hand, this does not diminish the fact that there are negative elements within communities of color that further violence (especially domestic violence) and dependency on drugs and alcohol. Yet I contend that in my time with the Eastside Café and with other autonomous spaces in Los Angeles, there was a clear move towards embracing the social networks aspect of community building but critiquing and dismantling its negative aspects as well.

THE EASTSIDE CAFÉ ECHOSPACE

The *Son Jarocho* song, *El Barrio*, fades quietly into the background. Roberto Flores, co-founder of the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE (Education, Cultural, Health Organizing Space) steps up to the microphone and recites the last stanza of the collaborative poem by *Fandango Sin Fronteras*, a collection of Chicana/o and Mexicana/o musicians in Los Angeles who are dedicated to the preservation and practice of the Afro-Mexican traditional music, *Son Jarocho*:

> Autonomy efforts in Northeast LA
> 1. Welcome to the Eastside Café –you got a space?
> 2. Find yourself in lyrical rhythmic waves of Ska/Raggae
> 3. Imagine all you really are –it's already taking place
> 4. A place of connection not concentration
> 5. Building community networks for all needs in all directions
> 6. Miss, miss, a cup of dialogical reflection?
> 7. Learning to rebuild community by re- membering itself
> 8. Relearning how to learn together with everyone else
> 9. Welcome to our echospace, you need some help? You need some help? You need some help?
> 10. Dispersed through migration, lost in translation we roam
> 11. To Learn who we are-we're calling our ancestors home
> 12. At Eastside Café?—yes our intellectual coffee is organically grown!
> 13. *Nos tiran como basura nos usan como ganado*
> 14. *Ningún Humano es illegal—Todo Ser Sagrado*
> 15. Welcome to the Eastside Cafe –*siéntate aquí lado a lado*
> 16. Deconstructing and resisting
> 17. necessary to see and be
> 18. Reconstructing our community—
> 19. our main activity
> 20. Welcome to the Echospace…
> 21. A cup of creativity?
> 22. It's our specialty
> 23. Only if we build it… is Another World possible
> 24. Your participation is essential… indispensable
> 25. Connected Autonomous communities make it realizable
> 26. Sipping mental mochas will awaken your dreams
> 27. Open Mic flows unfold our strategies
> 28. Youth networks: structures of accountability
> 29. Welcome: *Aquí responsabilidad sin rango*

30. *Bienvenidos: el mundo desde abajo*
31. Welcome: *para el sistema un relajo*
32. *Y aquí empieza el Fandango*

This poem describes the everyday activities of the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE, a political and cultural space in the Northeast Los Angeles community of El Sereno, California that since 2003 has focused on furthering "autonomy" and "self-determination" throughout the area. Roberto ended the poem with a group of musicians playing the song, *La Negra*, afterwards. Spaces like the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE in El Sereno are no longer uncommon across the urban landscapes of Los Angeles, California. Alternative cafes, art studios, musical venues, utility spaces, squatted empty lots, and urban gardens are all emerging from within the interstitial spaces of the global city to satisfy the need communities have for places to meet, dialogue, play, share in *comida*,[30] and other activities that produce social relations that are not dependent on the state nor on capital (Esteva and Prakash, 1998; Holloway, 2006; Deangelis, 2008).

The Eastside Café ECHOSPACE, in particular, has been at the forefront of this movement towards recuperating the "commons" and building autonomous spaces throughout Los Angeles. Its history, goals, and visions are an example of the trajectory Chicana/o urban Zapatismo has taken since its initial response to the Zapatista uprising in 1994. Although it opened its doors in 2003, the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE has been an evolving idea since the 1997 Zapatista/Chicano *encuentro* that brought together 120 Chicano artists, musicians, activists, and students from Los Angeles, California to meet with Zapatista communities of the Altos region of Chiapas, Mexico. From the encounter with the autonomous Zapatista communities, many of the Chicana/o participants felt the need to protect spaces in Los Angeles that resembled these autonomous spaces in

[30] Gustavo Esteva uses the term comida to discuss the community building potential in food preparation and sharing that is communal and collective. (Esteva and Prakash, 1998)

Chiapas while simultaneously facilitating the creation of other spaces throughout Los Angeles with the working concept of "autonomy" and "autonomous organizing" as the point of reference for their goals and visions.

Roberto Flores remembers the initial idea behind the Eastside Café during his time working at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California:

> We set up this thing called Westside Café in Loyola Marymount to give venue to a lot of people that barely started, like Jose Ramirez and Quetzal, Yesca trying to find little places to play. So what we would do is set up these little café type of places and that was their place, even groups like Chusma. And the people then were talking about police brutality issues, the education issues, through those venues.

By using the resources available at the university, Roberto along with other artists, musicians, and theatre groups were able to practice their art, educate university students and other outside community members about important struggles throughout the city and region, and follow up on the community building process they began during the organizing and actual encounter with the Zapatistas in 1997. Marisol, a member of the Chicana/o performance troop, Chusma, remembers practicing at different venues throughout the city as a way to "make *communidad*, with all kinds of people. Not only Chicanos but *inmigrantes*, natives, our Black brothers and sister, and with other struggles." By 2000, the Westside Café had grown into a popular revolving venue that could be used to bring people together in the Eastside of Los Angeles. Roberto recalls:

> We started having conversations with a bunch of folks. And so we started inviting people to our house, and we did that for like a year and a half. So every other Sunday, we have tostadas and watermelon, and people would gladly come and discuss how their dreams were taking shape from being inspired by Zapatismo. This was around 2002, 2003. And then we formed the Eastside Café, Omar [a Chicano graphic artist], Nuke [a well-known graffiti artist], and a bunch of folks were exhibiting at the Westside Café, and it was initially traveling at different campuses and we had it also as a way for MEChAs to make contact with each other and the communities. We wanted localization. That means being in touch

> and forming networks outside of your local area. We came up with the name the Eastside Café. At first, the logo said, "Not a place, a state of mind." Jose Ramirez [Omar's brother and artist] did the flower on the logo, but then we got the space. We did three events without a space. Just from the conversations we were having, we came to a conclusion that we wanted to work together so we had events. We had long discussions on autonomy and we understood it on a large degree, not until recently are we getting into a deeper understanding of autonomy.

I asked Roberto how the first people to discuss the concept of the Eastside Café envisioned the space. He reflected:

> I think that they understood this general thing of connecting different neighborhoods, since we were not all from the same places. Boyle Heights with Lincoln heights with El Sereno with East LA and Highland Park. Five areas we focused on. And we know that each area is distinct and we know that each area would promote their own events and do something for those areas. We wanted to get a discussion going on local organizing but in a way that is linked. That is as far as we took it. But that didn't mean that you had an understanding of reform and the obstacles that reform could play or a deeper understanding of what it meant how I think of the notion of, 'Ok how exactly is that going to happen?' didn't come until we had the actual *place*, because before it was just like having those five interlocking circles. Then we started talking about interlocking circles within the communities and the vision of democracy happening at the local level and the possibility that beyond the local there are obstacles to democracy. It was becoming more clear. Now we are diving into house to house project. Are you, we going to build these bungalows and how do we do it? Who is on the block, what can they contribute, what is their opinion, what kind of relationship do they have to their neighbors and to their neighbors?

The complexities of working on autonomy became a source of discussion for the co-founders of the Eastside Café. Olmeca, a Chicano hip-hop artist who at the time was a student at Cal State Los Angeles and part of the Eastside Café's first discussions remembers meeting at Roberto's house in El Sereno and discussing questions of how autonomy and self-determination could work at a local level. The discussions had helped him in his own work as a musician during his time with Slowrider, the Zapatista-inspired musical group. "Not only were we talking about community autonomy but at that time we were practicing as musicians. Who we signed with, what venues, the messages of our

songs, our audiences, all that stuff was important for us. To live autonomy and not just talk about it."

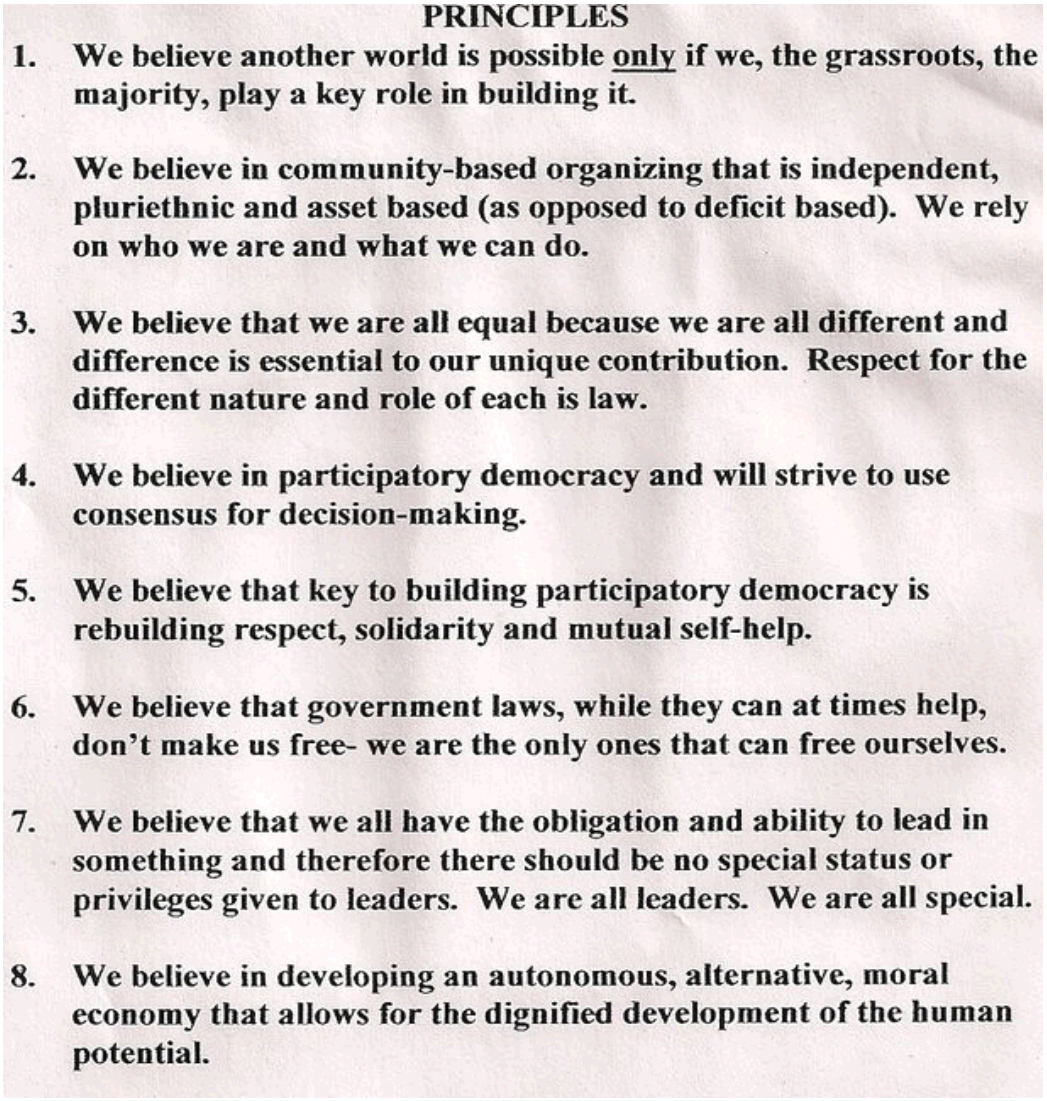
Eventually, the Eastside Café found a home in El Sereno, in a small storefront on the corner of Maycrest Avenue and Huntington Drive, where it is still located. The following sub-sections will focus on the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE goals and visions and how it practices autonomy and autonomous organizing in El Sereno, California.

The Eastside Café's Principles, Goals, and Visions

The Eastside Café's vision statement reads:

> The Eastside Café is committed to the belief that all people and all communities have the right to self-governance and self-determination and that we possess within our own communities all the knowledge and power to make this a reality. We are not involved in a struggle for power- we possess the power already and are working to create a positive alternative to the negativities of our present situation.

The language in the vision statement reflects closely the relationship the Eastside Café has to the Zapatistas. By negating the traditional notion of "struggle for power", alternative cafes like the Eastside Café are entering a conversation with other spaces over the right to self-governance and self-determination that is often veiled in barrios throughout Los Angeles, California as participation in the dominant political system. Instead, the Eastside Café suggests that power already lies in the hands of communities, which are traditionally seen as deficient, unorganized, or riddled with crime and other "negativities." The table below shows a working set of principles that the Eastside Café uses as a measuring stick on how their vision statement and goals are accomplished and furthered by its collectives and members.



PRINCIPLES

1. **We believe another world is possible only if we, the grassroots, the majority, play a key role in building it.**

2. **We believe in community-based organizing that is independent, pluriethnic and asset based (as opposed to deficit based). We rely on who we are and what we can do.**

3. **We believe that we are all equal because we are all different and difference is essential to our unique contribution. Respect for the different nature and role of each is law.**

4. **We believe in participatory democracy and will strive to use consensus for decision-making.**

5. **We believe that key to building participatory democracy is rebuilding respect, solidarity and mutual self-help.**

6. **We believe that government laws, while they can at times help, don't make us free- we are the only ones that can free ourselves.**

7. **We believe that we all have the obligation and ability to lead in something and therefore there should be no special status or privileges given to leaders. We are all leaders. We are all special.**

8. **We believe in developing an autonomous, alternative, moral economy that allows for the dignified development of the human potential.**

Principles of the Eastside Café Echospace

The vision statement and principles are established as a working reminder that the Eastside Café is dedicated at tackling the pressing needs and desires of the community while understanding that the long term vision is to make the process of autonomy an everyday practice and value. This is a challenging task that I asked members of the Eastside Café to explain in greater detail.

I asked Laura, a member of the Eastside Café when I first arrived to Los Angeles and co-founder of El Puente Hacia La Esperanza, about the initial goals and vision of the Eastside Café. She responded:

> We didn't want to be connected to the government. We didn't want to have a 501(c)3. We wanted to be completely independent. Figure out ways to be self-sustained. Provide a service or services to the community where we could stay afloat. And that was happening and it still is happening in many ways.

Similar answers were given by numerous Eastside Café collective members, both initial founders of the space and those who had come to work with the space on different projects. Omeatl, an early Eastside Café collective member and part of the Proyecto Jardin Caracol collective in Boyle Heights, shared with me:

> The Eastside is much more than a group of people who run a space. The goal is to become local, localized, however you want to say it. But most of the time what we want to do is to make sure people know that there is an alternative. Sometimes we walk around and don't see alternatives. And that leads our community into all kinds of bad situations. Our goal here is to create community but also know that community already exists. We don't want to tell people in El Sereno how to be communal or to work with one another. We want to do the opposite. You see, we want them to think of the space as their place. Where they can learn and teach about themselves. I think that is the toughest thing to accomplish here in the Eastside. To learn, listen, and teach.

The short and long term goals and vision of the Eastside Café came after long and serious discussions on the current state of the El Sereno community, the Greater Eastside of Los Angeles, the city of Los Angeles, the state of California, the United States, and the world. The type of popular political discussions that take place during Eastside Café meetings, events, and classes are not only initiated by more experienced political activists, although this is where the majority of the political discussions originate. They are instead embedded in every event that the Eastside Café sponsors. I saw this demonstrated during one of the English-speaking classes taught by volunteers at the

Eastside Café to mostly nearby neighbors and immigrant workers from Mexico and Central America. I wrote in my field notes:

> July 12, 2005: The class starts depending on the class size at around 5 or 6 pm. The Eastside is closed during the day unless one of the groups or collectives uses it for preparation or for practice. The tables are set up facing one of the walls with a dry erase board and markers in the middle for the instructors to put up examples. I enter the Eastside and sit in the back by the backdoor watching Roberto, who the students all call "ticher" or teacher. There are other instructors also helping with the class. Roberto previously told me that they were Cal State LA students or sometimes high school students from nearby Wilson High School. The students are all regulars at the Eastside. Blanquita is the most vocal and recognizable. She is an older woman who is widely respected and who lives a block or two from the Eastside Café…It is now 7 pm and the six students who are at the Eastside are fully engaged with the curriculum. Most of the lessons are based on working on conversational English but also mixed in with grammatical exercises. Roberto uses some of the time to talk about current events in both Los Angeles and Latin America. On this particular class he brings a Zapatista communiqué he shared with me. A communiqué we were going to discuss after the English classes during our Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle study group. The communiqué in English is also given in Spanish so as to see the translation in both. Having taught so many high school and middle school classes, I thought it would be hard to start a conversation between the students. I am reminded that Roberto mentioned prior to the class starting that this group of students who are mostly day laborers, housewives, childcare workers, and construction workers, that they are sharp and share their experiences when discussing current events. This is the case with the Zapatista communiqué. They start reading excerpts of the communiqué and it seems that freely they are all giving examples of similar situations that have occurred either in their home communities or in Los Angeles. A true and vibrant example of "popular education."

I attended several of the classes over the course of a year and half. Unfortunately, the English classes were not one of the projects I worked on during my time with the Eastside Café but it was one of the projects that showed its ability to produce a clear political analysis of the current local and global issues affecting these communities. I concluded my field notes from that particular class with an example of the type of

political analysis that the Eastside Café uses to constantly reflect on its effectiveness and whether it is living up to the collective goals of the Eastside Café vision statement.

> After reading from the English translation of the Zapatista communiqué, the students started talking in both English and Spanish about what they had just read. The few excerpts were on the current political situation in Mexico and the type of political corruption within the leftist leaning PRD, and the two corporate and conservative parties, the PRI and the PRD. Raul began by mentioning that, "*Siempre ha estado asi. El gobierno corupto y nosotros pobres*." Jose agrees with Raul and asks the "ticher" Roberto, what is the Zapatistas' solution to the corruption. Roberto begins by mentioning that the EZLN are not offering a solution they are merely giving voice to a widely known critique and analysis that gives power to the wealthy and the corrupt politician and not to the worker, or the immigrant, or the student. Blanquita then asks, "*También es así aquí en Los Angeles. Siempre prometen todo pero no cumplen con nada. Mira la calle en seguida. Tanto tiempo tenemos diciendoles que vengan a componer las calles y no hacen nada.* Josue interjects, *"En Puebla, en el pueblo donde vengo, alli todos saben quien toma mordidas y quien no. Para que te hagan algo necesitas que soltar el billete o nada pasa*." Josue begins to give the class a vivid example of a previous job he had as a coin collector on a local mini bus transport in his hometown of Puebla. He mentions how the bus driver had to pay not only the police officers of the community to protect his bus but also the local political bosses who arranged for the bus driver to have the proper paper work and licenses. The entire process after Josue finished seemed long and expensive. Once Josue finished it seemed to open everyone up even more as each one had an example, or as they put it, "*para taparle*", "to top that off," example after example. Roberto and the other instructors facilitated the discussion asking questions to clarify but rarely interjected unless asked to do so and usually in the context of the case of Los Angeles or the United States. Roberto would bring up many of the examples discussed in the late evening Zapatista study group that followed the English class.

CORPORATE, NON-PROFIT, AND STATE SOCIAL RELATIONS

From the example of the evening English classes and other events, three types of social relations emerge facing the communities of El Sereno and the Greater Eastside. The first set of social relations are tied to what many at the Eastside Café identified as a corporate relationship that impacted not only the daily interactions of people in Los Angeles, California but was a result of the continued expansion of neoliberal capitalism

in communities from Los Angeles to Mexico City. The second set of social relations speaks to the relationship between community members and the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC). Finally, the last set of social relations is tied to a deeply entrenched form of clientelism and political bureaucracy that exists between the community members of El Sereno and their local politicians. This relationship is also transnationally tied to experiences of clientelism in many of the Mexican and Latin American community member's home countries and to recent neoliberal forms of governance and management over urban space. The following three ethnographic vignettes discuss these three sets of social relations that the Eastside Café and its members see as the greatest obstacle for autonomy in El Sereno and the city of Los Angeles.

The Case of QuiQui: Corporate Subjects

My first Eastside Café coordinating committee meeting took place a month after I arrived to El Sereno in May of 2005. Beto had mentioned during the open house that the Sunday meetings were open to everyone and that the coordinating committee was a revolving group of people who met once or twice a month to deal with the logistics of the space. I decided to attend their next meeting to learn more about the space and maybe find a way to participate in the different events planned during the month at the Eastside Café.

I arrived several minutes early on a bright Sunday afternoon. Beto was already at the Eastside Café opening the steel gates and door to the space and setting up chairs around several utility tables in the middle of the room. I approached him and again introduced myself as Pablo from Estación Libre and the person who took over Olmeca and Mixpe's apartment while they were in Chiapas. He recognized me and welcomed me to the space. He asked me to turn on the fans in the middle of the room since the cords

were too high for him to turn them on without using a chair. My height came in handy as I reached up and switched the fans on. During the summer months, the Eastside Café would get hot and humid. The fans were sometimes the only draft and circulation of air the inside would receive. On sunny days like my first coordinating meeting, there was a slight breeze outside but since the inside was locked up for several days, the fans would help in circulating some of the stale air in the room. Eventually, a member of the English classes volunteered to install an air conditioning unit inside, but since it took up a lot of energy and ran up our electricity bill, we rarely turned it on.

In the meantime, Sirena, an Argentinean radical professor of Spanish and Chicana/o Studies at Cal State Northridge, arrived. Sirena had worked extensively with Estación Libre Los Angeles on several delegations to Chiapas and was a mentor to many of the Chicana/o graduate students at Cal State Northridge that went to Chiapas in December. Sirena also was deeply involved with autonomous projects in her home country of Argentina and saw deep parallels between the attempts at autonomy and autonomous organizing in Los Angeles and the *piquetero* and unwaged autonomy movement in Argentina. For Sirena, the important part of developing autonomy and autonomous networks was the interpersonal relationships individuals, collectives, and communities needed to have in order to build the trust and accountability infrastructure necessary for the movement to move forward and make autonomy an everyday practice.

Laura P., Jenna D., and Pepper arrived after Sirena. Both Laura P. and Jenna were well-known Chicana/Mexicana activists and part of the Eastside Café coordinating committee. They both had been working on Zapatista-inspired organizing for almost ten years and were interested in the co-operative aspect of autonomy. Laura P. for instance co-founded the conscious consumer co-operative, *El Puente Hacia La Esperanza* in order to bring local artisans, vendors, and musicians together and open a space for them to sell

or barter their non-sweatshop goods to the community. Pepper, on the other hand, was a graduate student at UCLA conducting his dissertation research focused on comparing the work of Casa Del Pueblo in Echo Park and the Eastside Cafe.

One of the main discussions that day revolved around the cleaning of the Eastside Café. One would think that a discussion on cleaning up the space would take a few minutes but the chore of keeping the space clean was very time consuming. Moreover, Eastside Café coordinating committee members wanted to make the cleaning process a collective endeavor that included people who used the space on a regular basis. Eastside Café members did not want to make it a custom for certain people to clean the space while others neglected the responsibility for keeping it clean. During these Sunday meetings, the majority of the time was spent discussing issues such as cleaning, fixing light switches, or maintaining good relationships with the Eastside Café's neighbors. Once a schedule was arranged for several of us to come on Saturday and clean up the space, we proceeded towards the last item on the agenda.

The second agenda item was a proposal for a local Salvadoran musician to use the Eastside Café as a venue for his music, which he called, "a mixture of eclectic sounds with traditional instruments." He wanted to use the space to showcase his music to friends and family since he had been awarded some funds to practice his music but did not have a place to play. He also promised to give music workshops on traditional Latin American flutes as a way to compensate for the permission to use the space. After very little discussion, everyone agreed to help the musician with his show. I would later attend this event at the Eastside Café, and while the music was not necessarily to my taste, his recital brought family and friends to support a local El Sereno resident and at the same time make contact with the Eastside Café as a space where they could find an interest in spotlighting the talents and contributions of people within the community.

The third item on the agenda was a scheduled meeting with QuiQui, a local Chicano artist who had recently returned from a long stint painting and working in San Diego. He had scheduled a meeting with the coordinating committee to discuss the possibility of using the space for his "welcome back" art show. He arrived midway through the meeting with several art pieces to show his style of painting. One of his paintings portrayed a skeleton in a Zoot suit similar to the images of the famous Mexican cartoonist Posada.

QuiQui began his presentation in a formal manner. He passed out a handout that showed the different places he had shown his art, what he needed from the Eastside Café, and what he could offer in compensation. "What I aim to do is have a professional 'welcome back' art show here at the Eastside Café with fifty or so people attending the art show." He took a look around the small utility room, giving a smirk at its humble appearance. "Do you have any hanging lines for art to hang from?" He asked. "I might need to put some up for my paintings."

I looked around the tables and saw the expressions on the faces of everyone in attendance. Laura interrupted with a surprised look, "Well before we agree to have the art show can you tell us a little about your art, whether you do art education workshops or if you do any community work?" QuiQui looked as surprised at the question as most of the meeting participants were to his opening remarks. "My community work? I paint about our people with images of skeletons to show our deep relationship to color and life with death. My art is my community work."

I remained quiet during the exchange since this was my first experience in an Eastside Café meeting. I silently wrote notes in my notebook along with several scribbles of "What a jerk!" and "Asshole!" on the margins.

Jenna added to Laura's initial questions by describing the Eastside Café's mission statement and the type of relationships they wanted to have with community members in El Sereno. "We have many artists come and have art shows at the Eastside Café, so it isn't that we are asking what type of art you paint, it's more like, 'What skills do you have to give a workshop or help paint a mural?'"

It seemed almost as if Jenna's comments were anticipated by QuiQui, who responded, "Well as you can see on the sheet I passed out, I am offering several forms of compensation for using the space." He proceeded, "The first option includes donating any percentage of sales I make during the art show to your committee. Of course, if I don't sell anything then you and I don't get anything." Again he smirked. "The second option I offer is to repair the mural you have in front of the building. I am a muralist and I can repair it, make it look better. The way it looks right now, it looks very amateurish." He turned his attention to the large mobile wood mural painted by Nuke, a well-known graffiti muralist from Los Angeles. It stood in the back of the utility room. "That would need to go and some of the tables and chairs I could probably put outside in the back."

Roberto interjected at QuiQui's last comments. "Well I think again, before we can make a decision we need to know more details of the art show. What we are trying to do here at the Eastside Café is build relationships with each other where people like yourself come back and offer your expertise to people in the community. So we are more interested in, whether you would be willing to do workshops or other work with the space."

QuiQui continued to look confused at the coordinating committee's suggestions and comments. He began referring to himself in the third person and stood up from his chair to start explaining how his art show could benefit the makeup of the space. "QuiQui's art is well-known and is guaranteed to sell. QuiQui believes 10 percent of

whatever QuiQui makes is a good deal." I had to hold myself to keep from laughing at his speech. "What QuiQui wants is to show his art and have wine and cheese after the show."

Jenna responded to QuiQui by mentioning that the Eastside Café is an alcohol and drug free space and that this was something that the coordinating committee could not compromise. Laura mentioned to QuiQui that meetings and decisions were not run in this very businesslike fashion and that what was important to build at the Eastside Café was a sense of community where you didn't feel like you were talking to a politician, a salesperson, or a social worker. I simultaneously looked at his reaction and he seemed still upset at the "no alcohol" policy of the Eastside Café. "I still don't understand. What if I have the art show here and take the wine and cheese to the barber shop next door?" QuiQui at this point was trying desperately to salvage his presentation by finding a way to have alcohol at his event by giving the committee the option of having the reception at the barber shop next door from the Eastside Café.

Jenna again responded, "The thing is that having alcohol next door is the same as having alcohol here. What we are trying to break from is the dependency our community has with alcohol and drugs. We tell a lot of our youth event coordinators that put on Punk or Ska shows that they cannot bring in alcohol or smoke weed inside and outside the space. So we ask that they not only take care of the space but also make rounds outside to make sure no one is spray painting any of the walls in the back or drinking and smoking near the space. Our neighbors don't like it and they end up with the image of the Eastside Café as having unruly and drug using youth or people." Laura added, "This is something we ask everyone to respect. It isn't a policy designed to stop you from having the show but for us to follow the mission and vision of the Eastside Café."

I was impressed by everyone's -- except QuiQui's -- calm demeanor during this exchange. I could tell that they were stressing the "no alcohol" policy more and more in order to dissuade him from pursuing the space as a viable venue for his art show.

QuiQui left the meeting soon after. We all stayed to reflect on the meeting and discuss the decision made. During the reflection period, I added my first comments on the ordeal. I first praised the group for being so patient with a person who seemed to be disrespecting the space and the group. I mentioned how I probably could not have the calm demeanor everyone showed during the QuiQui incident and that it made me feel relieved and certain that I wanted to participate more in the Eastside Café. Laura P. interjected how she and others had worked for years with artists and musicians and that her own personal history as a booking manager for such groups as Ozomatli and Quetzal made her more in tune with the obstacles and tensions that arise when working with cultural workers. The distinction she made between the groups she had worked with and QuiQui was that he seemed to think that the Eastside Café operated as a business with corporate rules, regulations, and practices.

Sirena added after Laura that this is what turned her off from the presentation. She was also relatively new to the Eastside Café meetings and she agreed with me that the demeanor of the coordinating committee had shown tremendous restraint. "I think that is what stands the Eastside Café apart from other community centers. If this is truly a community space then we make decisions as a community and I think we did that today. It's like what the Zapatistas say, '*mandar obedeciendo*' (leading by obeying)." Once Sirena mentioned the Zapatista saying, "*mandar obedeciendo*," those in attendance agreed that this basic principle of "leading by obeying" was a crucial concept for autonomous organizing.

Roberto finalized the meeting by cautioning us not to be too critical. QuiQui was an El Sereno bred artist and we could not simply dismiss him because of his attitude. But Roberto did make the same distinction that many of us were thinking or expressed. That QuiQui's approach and plan for the space was not the type of environment or relationship we wanted to foster at the Eastside Café. The café was a space to showcase the expressive talents of our artists, musicians, and poets, but not at the expense of building a corporate type of relationship with these individuals and groups. The QuiQui incident made such an impression on me that I would not miss another ESC coordinating committee meeting while I was in Los Angeles.

Applying for Grants: The Non-Profit Industrial Complex

> Among grassroots organizers in the United States, there is yet another moniker: 501(c)(3). The grassroots parlance cuts straight to the chase, stripping the NP (Non Profit) down to its most essential nature—that of an IRS tax category, an official registration with the US government that allows, among other privileges, the accreditation needed to receive government funding, as well as the majority of funds available through private philanthropic foundations. In exchange, the grassroots NP must adopt legally binding bylaws, form a board of directors modeled after the corporation, and make its board minutes and fiscal accounting accessible to the public (Tang, 2007).

Eric Tang (2007) discusses in the above quote the changing nature of grassroots organizing and the politics in receiving government and philanthropic aid from the state and private foundations. Although the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE is self-identified as an autonomous space and it is 100% self-sufficient without the funding of the state or private foundations, the politics of receiving funding and its members' relationship with the Non-Profit Industrial Complex is an important point of discussion on the internal enclosures that operate within grassroots and progressive collectives and organizations.

Once I began a weekly routine attending Eastside Café meetings and events, I noticed that many meetings dealt with the question of funding and paying rent. As I

mentioned in Chapter 3, Zapatismo in the city has many qualities and challenges that are different than Zapatismo in the indigenous communities of Chiapas, Mexico. One of the central differences is the question of sustaining a space with limited funds and the politics behind where the space gets its funding. This includes the politics of applying and asking for funds from even the most progressive of foundations. In this case, I offer the ethnographic example of the Eastside Café's investigation into the Liberty Hill Foundation for funding.

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At a monthly Eastside Café coordinating committee meeting during the summer of 2005, the question of applying for a grant was brought to the table for discussion. Over the two years that I worked with the Eastside Café, the concern over outside fellowships, grants, or non-profit funding was often put on the table in terms of whether the Eastside Café would apply for money. In each case, the decision to not take outside funds from the government or non-profit funders became more nuanced as the discussion became more frequent. Taking funds from state or non-profit entities was discussed in terms of what type of relationship the Eastside Café would enter into if they decided to go the non-profit route. Since most of the Eastside Café members on the coordinating committee had some experience with the non-profit sector, either as previous recipients of philanthropic aid or as employees at non-profits, the discussion often ended in a decision to not pursue this method of funding the space. On this occasion, Angela, a member of the Son Jarocho project within the Eastside Café, raised the issue of whether we should apply to the Liberty Hill Foundation for funding. The Liberty Hill Foundation was a well-known foundation that funded many non-profit and grassroots initiatives and organizations throughout Southern California. Most organizations did not have negative things to say about the foundation nor did they see them as detached from the growing

grassroots movement in Los Angeles. Angela proposed that the Eastside Café apply for a small grant from the Liberty Hill Foundation for several projects that needed funding. The Son Jarocho project, for instance, needed instruments for their growing class of students who wanted to learn how to play the *jarana* and other instruments. Another project included, operating a small coffee cart outside of the Eastside Café that could sell coffee to neighbors going to work in the morning. The cart could help in generating funds for the rent and other expenses that the Eastside Café had. After almost an hour of discussion, weighing the pros and cons of pursuing the grant, it was unanimously decided that members of the organization would attend the Liberty Hill Foundation information meeting to see if it was worth it for the Eastside Café to pursue external funding.

At the informational meeting several non-profit organizations from throughout the city arrived also to apply for the Liberty Hill grant. They were very professionally dressed with organized binders and files just in case the Liberty Hill administrators asked for additional information. Some even had a PowerPoint presentation that they were working on while we waited for the meeting to start. Of the organizations that met that morning, I only recognized the members of Casa del Pueblo in Echo Park. Casa del Pueblo is also a Zapatista-inspired autonomous space that works on issues of housing gentrification, youth empowerment, and self-sustainable community projects. They were at the meeting because they had received funds before from the Liberty Hill Foundation and were looking to reapply for additional funding. One of the main differences between Casa and the Eastside Café is the source of funding for their projects and for running their organizational spaces. Casa del Pueblo does accept funding from progressive foundations but it has a working analysis on the politics of taking foundation money. I asked Eddie Torres, one of the co-founders about this politics. He responded candidly:

> When we became incorporated into the 501(c)(3), we had a discussion for months, and months, and months, with the families and everybody. One of the moms, active in the project for three years said, "Will we be able to still have Zapatista posters and space if we become 501(c)(3) organization?" She said it. And she is a woman who is from the FMLN, but not really involved but knows about the FMLN. And she just knows that when we have certain posters from a political stance that "Wait a minute, how is it going to look on our 501(c)(3)?" and it was more for the housing project, if it weren't for the housing project we were not going to be a 501(c)(3). And I talked to a lot of organizations, a lot of grassroots organizations. And they were like "Eddie, they are a pain in the ass, I don't know if you want to do this." It's something that requires so much paperwork, and we don't like doing it. And the people who helped us were good progressive folks who did the work pro bono. And it's just something, that we lost a lot to gain that. And it is almost that concept that grandfather would share with me, he would say, "To come to this country, you lose everything to gain that car and house," you pay a price for it. And Casa has lost a lot, but it is a sacrifice that needed to be done, because these families, the reason why they come to Casa is because they believe in the project and they ultimately understand that if anything is going to change in terms of housing, it needs to be a cooperative project.

Eddie's critique of the non-profit sector is one that Casa del Pueblo has had to deal with because they do receive some aid from foundations and outside sources. As Eddie suggests, sometimes the projects cannot move forward without this funding but it is often at a price that many of its collective members dislike. In the case of Casa del Pueblo, it is not necessarily the relationship with funders, but the amount of work that it takes to be a non-profit, or the paperwork, that overwhelms a staff that does political activism and community building full-time. Maintaining the right paperwork and making sure that the collective accomplishes the goals set out in a particular project proposal takes a great amount of time that is not paid. Casa del Pueblo's community members are also vigilant of the contradictions involved in taking outside funds. Maria, a founding member of Casa Del Pueblo argues, "Many of them realize that nothing is "free" in this country and if we take funds, what does that mean to what we do with them? Are we going to have to take names? Especially since many of our housing collective members

have different citizenship statuses. Or they are so accustomed to us being Zapatista and they see that as if we could possibly lose that because nothing is 'free.' So it's tough."

In the case of the Liberty Hill Foundation, most of the organizations that were present had amazing projects that they wanted to pursue or get funded. Some of the projects had to do with environmental justice work in South Central Los Angeles, other work involved, helping fund a health project in South Los Angeles. For the most part, the organizations that attended were 501(c)(3) organizations and knew the process for applying for funds. Although the Liberty Hill funders were very clear that the funds were available not only to 501(c)(3) organizations but also grassroots organizations, for most of the Eastside Café members that attended the meeting, it felt as if one would have a greater chance of receiving the funds if they had a grant writer and non-profit status.

We took back the information given to us at the informational meeting and used several coordinating meetings and e-mail exchanges to discuss whether the Eastside Café would apply to the grant. One of the members, who had worked on a similar grant proposal for another Zapatista-inspired autonomous space in Echo Park, presented the approach taken by that space and how the Liberty Hill grant could fund a self-sustaining project like the t-shirt silk-screening printing business it helped fund in Echo Park. Other members looked to discuss alternatives to applying for the grant. Proposals to use local resources – such as local carpenters, painters, mechanics, cooks, etc— were discussed as a way to start self-sustaining businesses that could bring in much needed money for rent and other costs for the space.

Others added to the conversation by asking how future funding issues were going to be dealt with at the Eastside Café. With a number of projects off-shooting from the Eastside Café, funding issues would undoubtedly come up again. For instance, the growingly popular Son Jarocho classes were in need of instruments and traveling funds

for their classes. They often sought interest in city grants and other forms of funding. Would they also have to decline funds offered to them or were they exempt from the overall space? This was a point of contention between Eastside Café members who had a strong "autonomy" stance and those who wanted to find a common ground to discuss the pressing issues facing the Eastside Café and the El Sereno community. In order to come to some working consensus around the issue of outside funding, these meetings became popular education discussions with members outlining the pros and cons of city/state/federal/private funding and the work needed to become autonomous. Although it was decided to not pursue the Liberty Hill grant, the question over funding would continuously come up in meetings since resources are almost always scarce for autonomous spaces like the Eastside Café Echospace.

Eastside Café Members Relationship with the Non-Profit Industrial Complex

The tense and often contradictory relationship between the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC) and Chicana/o urban Zapatistas is an important factor contributing to the emergence of autonomy as a viable political and cultural vision. This relationship is tense and contradictory because many progressive organizations in Los Angeles that serve marginalized populations living in the barrios or ghettos of LA are somehow tied to the Non-Profit Industrial Complex. In this case, many of the Chicana/o urban Zapatistas that I worked politically with, either had previously held positions at or were working at the time with organizations that were receiving city, state, or private funding. Their grassroots political work with autonomous spaces or collectives was conducted after work during the evening hours. During my time working with the Eastside Café, one of the most interesting social dynamics I constantly observed was the working through of this collective and individual contradiction among Chicana/o urban Zapatistas. Working

by day within the system they were so adamant to bring down and organizing by night on constructing alternative visions was an extremely complex and difficult process for these men and women and the grassroots organizations they were involved in.

Because very few organizations were completely self-sufficient, most organizations had to focus a significant portion of their time on grant writing. I asked Fatima, who worked for a religious non-profit in Boyle Heights, about her daily work. She shared the following:

> I love my job with Proyecto Pastoral. We do some amazing work with the youth of East LA. You saw this when we had the event on Brazilian hip-hop. The youth really get excited and the staff work hard to help them with school and with growing up without fear. But I wasn't hired as a counselor or someone who works directly with youth. I do that on the side, with the YLN [Youth Liberation Network] youth that you've met. At Proyecto, I was hired to get money, to write grants, and to fundraise. It is sometimes a difficult, draining job because I want to be out there doing more than this but I see now that if I ever wanted to run a non-profit or start an organization that most of my responsibilities would be raising money. It's really difficult.

I worked with Fatima, while we were both in Austin, with a collective that ended up applying and receiving 501(c)(3) status. We both saw how in order to receive city funds, many worthwhile projects dedicated to politicizing youth, in this case, had to either be sponsored by an organization with 501(c)(3) status or it had to secure this IRS exemption. Besides the connection to the state or its requirement by private foundations, the exemption accentuated already existing internal turmoil within the collective because prior attempts at horizontally making decisions within the group shifted to vertical bylaws and decision-making systems.

It is clear, however, that the question of whether the Eastside Café will continue to be autonomous and self-sustaining will continue to appear during discussions and meetings. The open participation of individuals and groups to the space creates the

possibility for there to be decisions that might contradict the visions and goals of the Eastside Café. Even members that are vocal about not receiving government or private funding might feel the pressure to concede this organizing principle for fear of closing the Eastside Café's doors. In my years working with the Eastside Café, I have participated in many heated arguments, both in person and online, about philanthropic funding. The dialogue that is produced from these discussions offers collective members experience in constructing a political analysis in which to situate and articulate the Eastside Café's position on outside funding of the space and its many projects. Whether it does end up receiving outside aid or not, the dialogue and process is as essential to its survival as is the collection of material resources and funds.

La Virgen: The Role of the State and Clientelism

Individual/community/state relationships in the greater Eastside are complex sets of power relations. Neoliberal forms of governance suggest diminishing the role of the state if only to intervene for the purpose of opening markets for capital accumulation. (De Angelis, 2008; Harvey, 2007) This is an uneven process to say the least. In the barrios of East LA, such relationships between politicians, the state, and capital are not always for the purpose of opening markets. In many cases, certain power relations prevail over those that are market-driven. Power relations that are based on race, class, gender, and space also intersect across neoliberal matrices of power. For example, architectural and real estate development in ethnic neighborhoods have tried desperately to "Americanize" homes with a clean and sterile look to attract a more affluent and white clientele. In contrast, new immigrant families have remodeled their homes with bright energetic colors that resemble the architectural and neighborhood designs of the transnational communities they left behind. In response, politicians and real estate developers work

together, attempting to capture this new urbanism and diminish its effectiveness in shaping "place" for its residents by passing laws, regulations, and city ordinances that directly impact these immigrant populations. From the laws on selling food and produce on street corners to the expansion of homes, laws are created by the city to attract investment, develop new markets, and better police this growing racialized ethnic population.

These tensions between a growing and vibrant Latino urbanism, other community members, politicians, and real estate developers are discussed among Eastside Café collective members as a form of clientelism that exists between different communities and the city government of Los Angeles. From the everyday bureaucracy people deal with when engaging various city offices, to the show of favoritism to certain neighbors that support certain politicians and development projects, to more specific examples of demanding such city services as putting up stop signs or cleaning streets, most people feel that any action on the part of the city requires a favor on the part of the community or individual. These favors are usually returned through votes but on occasion favors might include more public support of city candidates through red ribbon ceremonies or photo opportunities.[31] What I noticed from many of the examples Eastside Café collective members shared during discussions was that the uneven power relationship with the state had elements of the old clientelism mixed in with new forms of neoliberal strategies over the governance of space. The following is an ethnographic example of the type of hybrid clientelism that has emerged under the banner of neoliberal governance in Los Angeles, California.

[31] Of course, with a large part of this racialized ethnic population being immigrant and undocumented, many politicians do not take into account this population because they do not offer the type of social capital they need for re-election. Until recently, more politicians have focused on the Latino immigrant population because of the billions of dollars that they produce through their labor and that they send to their countries of origin.

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I received an email from the Eastside Café coordinating committee stating that the Eastside Café needed volunteers to help with a small block party in honor of La Virgen de Guadalupe. The businesses next to the Eastside Café and the students of the English class decided it would be a nice gesture to close off the city block adjacent to the ESC and set up tables to serve *pozole* and *atole* to people from the neighborhood next to the mural of La Virgen around the corner from the ESC.

I arrived an hour early to open the ESC and take out the tables and chairs we had inside. Neighbors were already there getting things prepared for the evening event, putting up decorations and making room on the tables for the food and drinks. Blanquita, one of the students from the English class asked me to help her with the big pot of *pozole* she had at her daughter's home a block away. I took a rusty shopping cart with me to carry the heavy pot back to the party. Once I was able to put the pot in the cart, I carefully wheeled it back to the food table. I noticed several neighbors driving home from work wondering what I was pushing in the shopping cart. They seemed interested in the mass of people converging at the mural. After I dropped the pot off, we connected a long extension cord to set up a small sound system next to the tables. Some of the mothers from the neighborhood brought their children to the gathering and asked if we could close the street off so that the children didn't have to play in the street while we served food. The corner was a busy intersection for cars and buses to turn onto Huntington Drive and the amount of people that were showing up overflowed the sidewalk where we had attempted to close the street down. I pulled out several construction cones that were left behind a few months prior during a city works project on one of the side streets and placed them on both sides of the street so that the block

would get closed off and children who were playing outside would not run into any incoming traffic.

After I set the cones, I continued working on the lights. While I was working on plugging in the lights and placing the extension cords by the wall, a man I did not recognize approached me and asked if I knew who was in charge of the small outside gathering. He wasn't wearing a uniform nor could I make out if he was a police officer. I told him that no one in particular was in charge and that it was a community event in honor of La Virgen. He then proceeded to ask whether we had permission to close down the streets. This time he asked in a much different tone. I responded, "Why do we need permission if we live here in this neighborhood?" I proceeded to ask who I was talking to and he showed me what looked like a police badge but it didn't say "police department." "I am from the city and I am going around checking to see if gatherings like this have the proper permits." I responded again, "Why do we need permission to have a party when we are the people that live here in this neighborhood?" He did not like how I questioned his authority twice and again asked for someone in charge. I again responded, "Why does someone have to be in charge, why can't this be a community event where all of us are in charge?" The questions were beginning to annoy him, as he grew more and more impatient at me for not acknowledging his authority as a city official. By this time, Enrique from the barbershop noticed the confrontation and joined in our conversation. Enrique mentioned how he was a member of the El Sereno Chamber of Commerce and that this was a small event for the community to celebrate the December 12 festivities. The man replied, "I don't want to be the party pooper but you need a permit to close the streets and have a party outside. Next time just go to your councilmember and ask them for the permit. They will be happy to give you one. That way you are all legal." Enrique seemed a bit flushed and embarrassed because he used

his position within the Chamber of Commerce before as a way to distinguish himself from his neighbors. His position seemed to have no effect on the city official who threatened to call the police if we did not comply with his demands. Some of us asked him if we removed the cones from the streets, could we still have the gathering. He looked around and saw the sound system, "Well you can't have amplified sound without a permit as well." Several of the English class students got together inside the Eastside Café and conversed with some of us about what we should do. One of the students suggested we continue with the party and ignore the man from the city. "*Y que les importa!*' He let everyone know his displeasure at the event's interruption. The other students tried to calm him down by mentioning to him what type of attention this could bring to the people in attendance. The police were sure to arrive if we defied the man's orders. They proposed instead that we move the party to the sidewalk and that we wait for him to leave before we plugged in the music again. Everyone seemed to agree with the solution. Although the city official was not pleased with our response, he knew that he could not ask for a permit for the gathering if it was on the sidewalk. Ten minutes later he left in his car. Almost thirty minutes after he left, a police car came by but did not stop to say anything to the crowd.

What we found out later, after the event, was that such small gatherings were happening throughout East Los Angeles, with neighbors and families getting together and celebrating La Virgen de Guadalupe. In response, the city sent off duty police officers and planning officials throughout the many Mexican and Latino neighborhoods in order to cite people for not having proper permits.

THE NEW CULTURAL COMMONS:

As part of what I worked on with the Eastside Café during my two years, I developed and initiated an electronic listserv between Eastside Café supporters, coordinating committee members, and autonomous networks connected to the space. While the problem with using electronic list serves is that many people who do not have access to a computer or to an online service are not able to read or respond to e-mails or conversations Eastside Café members have with each other on-line, the purpose of the list serve was to expand the scope of Eastside Café supporters from throughout Los Angeles, California, and other regions and countries. It was an attempt at building an informational infrastructure that could incorporate not only the face-to-face interactions that were so necessary for the Eastside Café's goals and visions but also connect with other groups and individuals who shared some of the same concerns and visions in their communities. From the list serve, we expanded to a simple but effective website/blog that had an overview of the space and events planned for the month. Later we used our listserv and website to build a sustainer program where people could donate money for the rent by using online services such as PayPal to send money.[32]

In this case, creating and maintaining an autonomous space does not mean solely pursuing new methods for members to interact with one another or to engage in traditional methods for political discussion. It also means creating a space for different social actors, outside of the members of the space, to engage one another, where in any

[32] I opened the Eastside Café's PayPal account for people to make a monthly donation to the space possible. One of the problems with the PayPal idea was that it is usually made for business or online commerce sites. Although PayPal has accounts for non-profits and charity organizations, changes to their policy at times made it impossible to take out the money we were receiving because they demanded that we have a 501(c)(3) number. After countless number of calls and emails explaining to PayPal that the Eastside Café was not a non-profit organization but a grassroots collective and after sending them pictures and documents on the goals and visions of the Eastside Café, they took off the restrictions to the account. I faced the same issues with other accounts including the Estación Libre PayPal account as well.

other circumstances those spaces would not be available. Youth, in particular, lack spaces to meet, perform, and dialogue together in a safe drug and alcohol-free environment. The Eastside Café has opened its doors to youth of color throughout the eastside to organize such events as Punk and Ska concerts, open-mic spoken word competitions, and Hip Hop MC battles. Performing in a safe drug-free, violence-free, and alcohol-free environment that is both political and open to the diverse forms of cultural expression that youth create is an important part of what the Eastside Café aims to achieve in terms of community building.

Community Gathering for a Presentation on Immigration Laws
Photo by Eastside Café Echospace

Of the numerous political events that the Eastside Café sponsored or hosted, the majority of them had an integral cultural component. The question of incorporating a cultural component like traditional ceremony, music, art, or multimedia into political

events is a marker of an emerging Chicana/o grassroots activism in Los Angeles, California. That is not to say that other racial/ethnic groups or communities do not incorporate the same organizing principles, but instead, that in places like East Los Angeles, the cultural is as crucial as the political. I asked members of the Eastside Café at various times about this threading of the political and the cultural. One of the responses from a Chicana member of the Eastside Café's women's self-defense class is telling in terms of contextualizing this relationship:

> It's not a question of putting an aspect of culture with a political gathering, Pablo. Most political events are geared toward giving the community information. That information many times is designed to give us the problem. The deficit. What we are missing from the equation. Our communities need more than that. They understand what the problems of our neighborhoods are. They see them every day. But we must also share the positive aspects of our communities. The aspects that capitalism has not commodified or sold. Our understanding of ourselves. Our cultures. When we incorporate a spoken word or poetry reading during an event on Chiapas or Venezuela or when we bring in Ska or punk bands to talk about demilitarizing the schools then we are offering and sharing our assets. What we have and are capable of doing. It's the starting point of many of our movements here.

Picture taken of the Eastside Café Women's Self-Defense Class
(Source: Eastside Café ECHOSPACE)

I asked this Chicana member about the Women's self-defense class and what purpose it serves in terms of bridging the political and cultural. She responded candidly:

> Think of it this way. Most *mujeres* in the barrio don't feel safe. They don't feel safe walking to the store or to pick up their kids from school. Young women and our elders don't feel safe. They then think of their neighborhood as unsafe instead as a place where they can be free. What we do in the self-defense class is teach each other how to protect ourselves and trust each other to believe in ourselves as a community. When you see the grandmas and moms walk with confidence and the young women who go to high school walk tall then you can create community…I think of this as essential to our projects, our autonomous projects. That's political *qué no*? Then when, you say cultural, I say, 'Well, we don't teach self-defense without taking into account our cultural traditions and customs. We have to be respectful. Always.

To accentuate this point in terms of the cultural and political as key to the formation of the Eastside Café, the following two ethnographic vignettes discuss the role cultural festivals and gatherings have within the Eastside Café vision.

Dia De Los Muertos in El Sereno

Picture of the Eastside Café during the Dia de Los Muertos Event, 2008

I arrived around dusk to the Eastside Café on November 2, 2006. Roberto was pulling up in his car. He asked me to help with some of the materials he had in the trunk. "So what do we have planned Beto?" I asked. "I'm not sure right now. I think we are going to have a small procession and make an altar inside. Xochi is going to help with the altar and I know that some of the *jaraneros* are coming to have a *fandango*. What do you think? Should we play it by ear?"

We didn't seem to have a clear vision of what we wanted to do for "Dia de los Muertos." It was our first attempt at working on a celebration like "Day of the Dead." We both moved tables from the inside to just outside of the front door. "We can use these tables to put the *pan dulce* that some of the English class students are bringing."

Face painting inside of the Eastside Café during the Dia de los Muertos event

More people started arriving as we were cleaning the space. Some were helping set up an altar by the front window by placing marigolds in vases they had brought from home. Others started placing colorful place mats to put candles and other items on the altar. Pictures of people's deceased relatives and friends were periodically placed on the altar. I could hear short prayers and stories by some of the people that started arriving and that were leaving personal items and pictures on the altar. On one of the inside tables utility boxes full of markers, crayons, paint brushes, and glitter were laid out for the children who came with their parents to draw and paint images of skeletons in dresses

and wide brimmed hats. Chairs were lined up besides these tables in order for some of the volunteers to start face painting adults and children with skulls and other symbolic images of the Day of the Dead.

The *jaraneros* and *fandangeros* started trickling in, tuning their *jaranas* for the evening's *fandango*. They carried the *tarima* from the inside to just outside by the outside tables. Roberto and Xochitl made the suggestion that a procession might be a good idea to some of the blocks next to the Eastside Café with the *jaraneros* leading the procession. Roberto remarked, "But we need a coffin, something that looks like a coffin to represent the dead." I went through the backdoor and picked up some cardboard boxes from the outside that were left as trash by the carpet store next door. "We can use the cardboard to make a coffin and put crosses on it." Once we had made what looked like a coffin the jaraneros started playing their instruments and leading a small procession of twenty or so people through Maycrest Blvd. People within the procession carried candles and four of us carried the coffin throughout the procession. Many porch lights came on as we walked through the neighborhood with the sounds and music of *son jarocho*. Some of the neighbors popped their heads out of their front door to see what was going on others walked outside and started greeting us with some left over *pan de muerto* that they had in their homes. For those that came out we stayed for a couple of songs while they told us stories of their deceased love ones. One neighbor had a lavish altar outside of her home and when she saw us coming down the block she brought out her left over candy from Halloween and *pan de muerto*. She mentioned to us that she wished she would have known about the procession because she would have loved to be a part of it and that next year the procession should come by her home and play for a while. After an hour of walking, singing, and playing songs, the procession made its rounds back to the Eastside Café where the *jaraneros* set up for the *fandango*. After several hours of playing and

dancing on the *tarima*, I noticed that the group of twenty that went on the procession had grown to over fifty people. Some of the people who arrived were neighbors we had visited during our procession. They wanted to continue the celebration by participating in the festivities.

Flyer announcing the 2007 Dia de los Muertos Event at the Eastside Cafe

The Eastside Café *Dia de los Muertos* event has grown significantly since the first year. As one Eastside Café *jaranera* musician mentioned, "The last couple of years, just the amount of homes and neighbors that want us to come during our procession and sing and play, has grown where we have to start earlier and visit more streets."

There are much larger processions or festivities throughout the Greater Eastside that have huge followings. In East Los Angeles, there is the annual *Dia de los Muertos* event at Self-Help Graphics that gets hundreds of people to attend in a night of art, music, and food. Other private gatherings between Chicanos and Mexicanos that practice Mexica indigenous ceremonies begin weeks before the actual November 2nd date for *Dia de los Muertos*. Similarly, in El Sereno, the local charter school, Academia Semillas del Pueblo, honors the dead in a similar way by teaching their elementary and middle-school students on the indigenous significance of *Dia de los Muertos* as part of their curriculum and cultural practice.

The Eastside Café *Dia de los Muertos* festivities mark a much more localized and grassroots approach to the larger and extravagant events throughout Los Angeles. Like the Virgen de Guadalupe example in the previous section, the *Dia de los Muertos* event represents not only the continued cultural practice of an important Mexican and Latin American tradition by Chicanas/os, Mexicanas/os, and Latinas/os, but it also serves several important purposes to build on the mission and vision of the Eastside Café. These include but are not limited to building a trust and respect with the El Sereno community; offering Eastside Café members the opportunity to take on leadership roles in organizing the event; and in contrast to the previous Virgen de Guadalupe example, forging community relationships that are not based on asking permission from city officials but instead redefining public space for the purpose of celebrating forms of cultural expression like the Day of the Dead festival.

The Fandango

Son Jarocho Fandango outside of the Eastside Café Echospace
Photo by the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE

One of the most frequent types of gatherings that the Eastside Café hosts is the Son Jarocho *fandangos* between beginner, novice, and expert musicians and dancers who practice the Veracruz Son Jarocho musical art form. The Son Jarocho *fandangos* or cultural gatherings are a growing cultural phenomenon and movement throughout the Latino metropolises of the United States that promote community building, protection of cultural traditions, and the revival of traditional music and art forms. Although this growing movement of men and women of different ages and skill levels has its own internal politics, what I want to describe in the following vignette is its importance in terms of community building, to the Eastside Café and Chicana/o urban Zapatistas in Los Angeles, California.

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Son jarocho fandango outside of the Eastside Café Echospace

I met Xochitl, a member of the coordinating committee and part of the Son Jarocho collective within the Eastside Café, at the back of the Eastside Café on a cool Friday evening. She asks me to help her grab one of the large pieces of wood board left outside by the owner of the carpet store next door. We both grab one end of the piece of wood and bring it in next to the *tarima*. Most of the musicians keep playing while we bring in the piece of wood, as if they didn't notice we were gone. We place the wood board carefully on the concrete floor and as fast as we place it on the ground, three *companeras* start to dance on top of the board. We both started to laugh, as she grabbed my hand to teach me on the side of the wood board a few *zapateado* steps. I remind her that my *zapateado* is more of a Chicano version of a *ranchera/banda zapateado* than a *son jarocho zapateado*. Again, she laughs and tells me, "Don't you know! All of our *zapateados* are a crazy Chicano version of *son jarocho zapateado*!" Her laughing reminder resembles the lyrics to a Quetzal song titled, "Canto de los pies", where

Chicana lead singer and musician, Martha Gonzalez, referring to Chicanos who practice the Son Jarocho tradition, sings, "*El Chicano siempre inventa*." That night and almost every night that the Eastside Café hosts a *fandango*, is a rehearsal and practice of not only the Son Jarocho musical and dance form, but also a localized and particular type of expression and interpretation of the Afro-Mexican music by a growing pluri-ethnic group of people who see the fandango as a form of building community through music and dance.

Flyer for the Son Jarocho classes at the Eastside Cafe

Of all the consistent cultural events that the Eastside Café sponsors, the Mexican son jarocho *fandangos* are by far the most popular. The Son Jarocho beginners and intermediate classes have a huge following and the *fandangos* are attended by people throughout the eastside and as far south as Santa Anna in Orange County. Originated by enslaved Africans left behind in Mexico during the 16th century, son jarocho is a musical tradition from the eastern coastal state of Veracruz that combines African sounds, instruments, and rhythms with indigenous and Mestizo musical forms. The combination of making music through instruments and dancing or *zapateando* reflects the resistance aspect of the musical art form. Enslaved Africans who had their drums and traditional instruments stripped from them, used dance and song in order to keep their stories and traditions clandestinely alive from their Spaniard slave owners.

Chicana/o musicians and dancers taking up the son jarocho tradition do so for a myriad of reasons, one of which is the tradition of resistance inherent in the musical art form.[33] Bridging traditional Mexican music with their own styles and cultural production, Chicana/o *jaraneros* are learning the Son Jarocho music through a series of encounters with Mexican musicians that are attempting to preserve the music in Veracruz. Such famous Son Jarocho musical groups like Son de Madera, Los Cojolites, and Mono Blanco have given workshops on Son Jarocho to Chicana/o musicians wanting to learn the music and dance. They have also performed on collaborative music projects with Chicana/o musicians who use the music within their own musical production. Groups like Quetzal, for instance, use the *tarima* and *jaranas* within their Chicano music as central sounds and expressions.

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[33] This is demonstrated by the appearance of son jarocho musicians at protests and other political events. This seems a little weak. I would focus on the rebel roots of the music. Like candomble in Brazil, Afro-Cuban drumming, or the coded spirituals of enslaved African Americans, these communities used the arts to retain their ancestral memory, subvert white control over the black body, and to create collective spaces of creativity and pleasure in the midst of their enslavement and subjugation.

Spaces like the Centro Cultural de Mexico in Santa Anna and the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE are epicenters of a Chicana/o brand of son jarocho music that is forming collectives of musicians and dancers who perform at community events, concerts, fundraisers, and neighborhood *fandangos* throughout Southern California. Regional and neighborhood identities converge during such neighborhood *fandangos* where the purpose of the fandango is the collective sound of the musicians and dancers that arrive and celebrate in the *fandango*. As one *jaranero* who was in high school learning to play the cajon mentioned to me, "I'm in a punk band with some of my homies from high school. That part of me uses punk to let the rage out but here I learn to work as one of the group to make one sound." Making "one sound" is an important aspect of the *fandango*. With different levels of experience, it is often intimidating for participants to feel comfortable playing, singing, or dancing during the *fandangos*. This is a major obstacle that is constantly addressed throughout *fandangos*. Those *jaraneros* or dancers that have more experience are also teachers to other participants who don't have the same experience. By sharing their techniques and approaches to the musical art form, *jaraneros* are attempting to build a horizontal space where the hierarchies that exist due to experience are dismantled by the collective mentorship taken up by those attending the *fandango*. The Eastside Café along with a growing number of other spaces are central to the creation of these spaces and the growth of the *fandango* model throughout Los Angeles.

SUMMARY

From May 2005 to December 2006, I worked daily at the Eastside Café as a coordinating committee member, witnessing and participating in the daily work of the Eastside Café. At first, I did not intend on making the Eastside Café one of my primary

field sites. I arrived to Los Angeles, California wanting to investigate the work of Estación Libre, a transnational collective of activists and community organizers of color from the United States, with a headquarters in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, and a regional collective in Los Angeles. Although the work with Estación Libre offered critical information on the development of a transnational Chicana/o activism inspired by the Zapatistas, it did not have a permanent space in Los Angeles. As both an activist and member of the Estación Libre collective I expected to work politically with Estación Libre members and build political and personal ties with other Zapatista-inspired collectives and spaces. My introduction to the Eastside Café came from my participation in this growing network of Zapatista-inspired work. What first became a way to politically engage in the local politics of El Sereno and meet other Chicana/o urban Zapatistas, became my daily political and cultural work. I attended weekly meetings, gradually participated in the daily operations of the small space in El Sereno, and later helped create several infrastructural mechanisms for communication like e-mail list serves and internal websites. Working with the Eastside Café also helped with introducing me with other Zapatista inspired autonomous spaces and collectives. As a collective member I was invited to attend and work with other spaces to strengthen a vast trans-local and trans-regional network that went as far north as the Oakland Bay Area and as far south as Venezuela in South America.

My eventual ethnographic work, which from the start was spurred by my political interests and history, was a mixture of local political analysis around the concept of autonomy and autonomous organizing and tools I had learned in the university. Such a mixture is bound to have inherent contradictions on applying anthropological methods to real political and cultural events. In communities of color, like the barrios of the Greater Eastside of Los Angeles, there is a tendency to see anthropological work through

skeptical eyes. A long history of social scientists framing the lives of racialized ethnic Mexican culture and life as pathologically inferior and static, has created tensions between barrio dwellers and social scientists. This was an issue during my time working with the Eastside Café. Although I had worked for almost ten years as a Chicano urban Zapatista in many capacities with well known collectives in the United States and in Chiapas, the stigma of being an academic and an anthropological researcher made it consistently difficult to not answer questions as to motives surrounding questions and inquiries that I may have had around how the Eastside Café and other collectives worked. Such concerns were valid not solely because of issues concerning what the research would be used for but instead because of this long contentious history between barrios and the academy. I did not fully resolve such concerns during my time working with the Eastside Café but I did make a concerted effort to frame and build my research questions through my actual interaction with Eastside Café members and the communities they represented and not through a traditional anthropological approach of coming with a set of already fixed questions and concerns. This allowed me to frame my analysis on the everyday workings of the Eastside Café in solidarity and political aligned to the Eastside Café mission statement and the work of Eastside Café members.

In general, the Zapatista-inspired autonomous space, the Eastside Café, concerns itself with the growing needs and concerns of not only the El Sereno community but also with broader citywide, regional, national, and international issues that affect disenfranchised populations. Although it is always in danger of closing its physical location due to rental costs and concerns over participation, the Eastside Café is an example of the growing trend in urban areas towards the formation of autonomous spaces and autonomous organizing. It differs from other spaces in Los Angeles that may seem more focused on organizing political direct action by analyzing the conditions and social

relations that are produced by the prevalent racial and economic social order of the city and region. Such power and social relations include the production of corporate subjects, the reliance on the non-profit industrial complex for funding the space, and the relationship with the state and state officials. In response, the Eastside Café is a site of a new cultural commons. For one, it is a major space for the cultural production of Chicana/o urban Zapatismo in Los Angeles, California. The Eastside Café is a space that keeps with the long tradition of building and continuing the political and cultural solidarity with such social struggles as the Zapatista indigenous movement of Chiapas, Mexico. It also furthers specific forms of cultural production that are keen to a new Chicana/o political and cultural consciousness that is locally specific but global in reach. Such cultural encounters like the son jarocho classes and fandangos and the Dia de los Muertos festivals attempt to disrupt and create alternative social relations that are not dependent on the market form or on the state. The Eastside Café offers this as an important intervention and source of a transforming Chicana/o urban Zapatista subjectivity. Such spaces throughout Los Angeles, California are indicators that space and place are still crucial sites of Chicana/o identity and political mobilization. Chapter 6 will discuss the immediate danger autonomous spaces face in a neoliberal capitalist society through the example of another Zapatista-inspired autonomous space in Vernon, California, the South Central Farm.

CHAPTER 6

The South Central Farm

One of the many garden plots at the South Central Farm
(Source: www.southcentralfarmers.com)

> The dominant form of space, that of the centres of wealth and power, endeavours to mould the spaces it dominates (i.e. peripheral spaces), and it seeks, often by violent means, to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters there.
> (Lefebvre, 1991: 50)

Autonomous spaces like the Chapter 5 example of the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE in El Sereno, California face numerous challenges to their daily operation and existence. Minimal funding and resources are accentuated by a changing level of participation by community members and local activists. Because of this, most autonomous spaces have a short shelf life in urban areas. Those that are successful in making a sustained impact in their communities are capable of transforming urban areas into non-commodity forms of space. Urban gardens and farms, for instance, have become a challenge to dominant views on space and public use of space. They are an

oasis within seas of concrete that provide a viable food source to low-income communities of color in Los Angeles, California. Chapter 6 will discuss one particular urban farm in South Central Los Angeles that for over fourteen years, from 1992 to 2006, was able to sustain the basic food needs of hundreds of families in an economically-depleted area of Los Angeles. The 14-acre South Central Farm in Vernon, California, provides a significant example to the emergence of autonomous spaces and movements towards food sovereignty in urban barrios and ghettos throughout Los Angeles, California. It follows the political solidarity work I conducted with the South Central Farm from 2005 to 2006. I follow the emergence of the farm, its impact on mostly Latin American immigrant families and its eventual demise at the hands of real estate developers wanting to use the 14-acres to build one of many industrial warehouses already in the area. Besides focusing on the South Central Farm's impact as an autonomous space, this chapter argues that the contemporary relationship between violence; forms of racial, economic, and gendered governance in a neoliberal era; and the policing of urban barrios and ghettos in LA; operates to protect the foundational premises of modern coloniality, global capitalism, and what I refer to as "neoliberal white supremacy." This includes the separation, disciplining, and control of racialized populations in inner city zones (i.e. barrios and ghettos) where rights are denied and forfeited for those living within, what Achille Mbembe (2003) calls "death worlds" and what Devon Peña (2008) describes as "necro-capitalism." This also includes protecting the racialized capitalist idea of "private property" by destabilizing and putting to "death" collective attempts at navigating, resisting, and creating alternatives to these racial, economic, and gendered regimes of power that structure and govern the modern "panoptic city" (Davis, 1990; Peña, 2006). Finally, I argue that in the case of the South Central Farm struggle, such collective attempts at disrupting the neo-colonial, neo-liberal,

and economic regimes of the region, produce openings for de-colonial "anti-capitalist" social relations that despite being met with violence and forced displacement, capture the growing social co-production of what I suggest are biopolitical possibilities or "life worlds" by populations living in the barrios and ghettos of the global city.

These "life world" struggles although successful for long periods of time have eventually been met with destructive and violent retaliations on the part of the corporate-backed state and its many policing apparatuses. As part of an ongoing form of "infrastructural warfare" (Mbembe, 2003) primarily against communities of color, violence, in its numerous manifestations, underpins a hegemonic racialized class structure that values individualism, competition/conflict, profit, and accumulation over collectivity, cooperation, mutuality, and self-determination. Yet, as the state engages in premeditated violence, the more marginalized populations respond with their own resistance and creative strategies to preserve and remake alternatives against the predominant logic of neoliberal capitalism in cities worldwide.

THE SOUTH CENTRAL FARM:

> Imagine a space where families gather everyday to work on the community farm. Imagine they have made this special place into a sustainable source of local food. They have created an edible landscape, a green mosaic conjoined from a wide variety of native food crops, medicinal plants, fruit trees, creepers, crawlers, and cacti. Imagine that the people plant family heirloom seeds that have been carefully selected over the generations. Imagine the seeds are at least five thousand years old and are drawn from the ancestral crops of the Americas. Imagine a space where indigenous women cultivate heirloom crops and weave visions and memories of their cultural identity and heritage into the landscape. They are making place; they are making home. Imagine the passing of their knowledge to the next generation in memories of plant stories and the social and ecological skills of the farmer. Imagine youth eagerly assisting with the cultivation of heirloom maíz, frijol, calabaza, guayaba, chipilin, and chilacayote. Imagine youth who know hundreds of wild and cultivated plants, their nutritional and medicinal properties, and what it takes to grow them naturally. Now imagine this space is located not in rural Mexico, say Oaxaca or Michoacán. Instead,

> imagine it is located in the heart of the urban core of one of the world's largest and most important global cities, Los Angeles, California. Imagine then nothing less than the amazing fourteen-acre urban farm known as South Central Community Garden located at 41st and Alameda, across the way from Vernon and a few minutes from Watts (Peña, 2005)

Devon Peña's description of the fourteen-acre South Central Farm in Vernon, California disrupts most popular ethnographic accounts of a South Central Los Angeles filled with crime, violence, unemployment, and despair, a topography of Los Angeles condensed with warehouses, factories, strip-malls, liquor stores, and homes heavily fortified with steel bars. Peña instead insists on opening our sensory imagination to a place that one may only find outside of the monolithic "ghetto," an "oasis" similar to the shrinking farmlands of rural Mexico.

In early July 2006, this urban "oasis" that Peña describes, was completely bulldozed and cleared in preparation for a future distribution warehouse. Prior to its bulldozing, from 1994 to 2006 the South Central Farm provided a healthy food alternative for 360 mostly Mexican, Chicano, and Latino families that either lived in South Central or in the greater Los Angeles area.[34] Besides offering food security for hundreds if not thousands of people for nearly twelve years, the farm stood as a symbol of resistance within an economically depressed but rapidly changing inner city. This chapter is on the South Central Farm, its farmers, and farm supporters, who dedicated their time, energy, and lives to the preservation of an ecological treasure in one of the most polluted and industrial neighborhoods in the United States.

[34] The County of Los Angeles in 1992 described the boundaries as "the area bounded by the Long Beach Freeway on the East, the Santa Ana and Santa Monica Freeways on the North, the San Diego Freeway to Crenshaw Boulevard and then Crenshaw Boulevard to Lomita Boulevard on the West, and Lomita Boulevard on the South. The recent renaming of South Central Los Angeles by the City of Los Angeles to South LA only problematizes spatial boundaries further.

Aerial view of the South Central Farm
(Source: www.southcentralfarmers.com)

The South Central Farm Struggle: A Brief Post-1992 History

The South Central Farm was formed out of this violent spatial dichotomy and out of intense social struggle and turmoil. The 1992 Los Angeles rebellion, like the 1965-Watts rebellion, uncovered the mass inequality and urban plight of inner city urban dwellers in Los Angeles. Yet the everyday experiences of poverty, racism, police brutality, domestic violence, and unemployment faced by both African Americans and Latinos in South Central Los Angeles went mostly ignored by local and national politicians and the media, which blamed the "criminal" element during the riots, as the cause of the violence and destruction of private property. The previous two decades slowly ended an era of government spending on social programs that would have directly benefited poor and working class people of color in inner city areas depressed by job loss

and infrastructural decay. The state, instead, introduced market-driven policies that privatized and limited public health care, city works, and social welfare programs to populations in need of social resources.

The neglected inner city became the dumping grounds for unrestricted industries that spewed toxins into the air, creating illnesses among children and adults living in the inner city. In the mid-1980s, the Los Angeles Department of Public Works acquired the fourteen-acres of land on 41st and Alameda in Vernon, California through eminent domain from the Alameda-Barbara Investment company, a private investment company that owned substantial amounts of land throughout Los Angeles and Southern California. The city of Los Angeles intended to turn the 14 acres into a trash incinerator. The incinerator would cause more pollution to an already environmentally impacted area of Los Angeles. Yet, the city confronted an unexpected response by the South Central community. The mostly African American community that lined the predominantly industrial corridors of Vernon and South Central Los Angeles protested the incinerator plan and organized formidable opposition to the city's project. Calling themselves the Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles and led by local organizer, Juanita Tate, the community demanded that the city conduct public hearings on the LANCER (Los Angeles City Energy Recovery) project and a rigorous health risk assessment that would inform community members of the possible environmental and health risks of having another industrial building and incinerator next to their neighborhood.

For decades, it was common practice for industries to operate against city, state, and federal environmental regulations in barrios and ghettos throughout Los Angeles, California. Many of these textile, commercial, and heavy machine industries used volatile and dangerous chemicals that were disposed of improperly near parks, schools or homes. The large number of warehouses and distribution centers also operated daily with

the help of diesel trucks, generating unbearable industrial noise and spewing toxic fumes into the air non-stop 24-hours a day. Another incinerator would add to the already high levels of smog in South Central Los Angeles and, more importantly, create serious health risks for the mostly poor and working class African American and growing Latino communities in the area. The Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles were successful in stopping the LANCER project in 1987 and the land was left unused for several years leading up to the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion.

The 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion:

Three decades of structural unemployment, coupled with the Reagan years neo-conservative dismantling of post-civil rights social welfare gains added to the already dire conditions of Blacks, Mexicans, and Latinos living in South Central. Yet, not all parts of South Central felt the same poverty and lack of opportunities. Like previous eras, internal migration between middle-class and upwardly mobile Blacks in South Central separated them from the poverty-stricken and gang infested areas where their waged and unwaged Black working class counterparts lived. Thus, South Central Los Angeles remains the site of both the poorest immobile population of Blacks and the most affluent and upwardly mobile class of Blacks in the United States (Costa Vargas, 2006).

Demographically, by the beginning of the 1990's, most areas of South Central were racially/ethnically different than just ten years before. The increase in Mexican and Latin American migration to Los Angeles, much of it undocumented, added to the growing tensions between racial/ethnic groups in South Central. These tensions, mired in economic stagnation, manifested themselves in April 1992 when an all white jury handed down a "not guilty" verdict for four Los Angeles police officers convicted of beating Rodney King, a Black motorist, after being pulled over for speeding a year before. The

"not guilty" verdict outraged communities of color throughout the United States and capped off an already boiling situation in terms of race relations in South Central. Like the Watts rebellion in 1965, people took to the streets in a show of social unrest and discontent for years of neglect by city officials and racist repression by the Los Angeles Police Department. In retrospect, the 1992 rebellion set the stage for a series of political, economic, and social changes that would alter again the spatial arrangement of racialized groups in South Central.

Once again, federal and state funds failed to address the structural causes for the rebellions. In fact, the criminalization of Black youth during and after the rebellions led to the funding of a well-equipped police presence in South Central, which increased the number of Black males incarcerated and the eventual building of more prisons to hold this new population. Immigrants saw a reinvigorated sense of xenophobia throughout most of society with the passing of Proposition 187 in 1994. The proposition would make it illegal for undocumented children to receive proper education and health services and had strict policing measures to stop and derail undocumented migration to California.

The 1996 Welfare and Social Responsibility Act introduced by the Clinton administration reflected the neoliberal state's focus on individual responsibility and "back to work" training programs. These federal acts reproduced the criminalization of Blacks and Latinos in the 1980s, especially poor Black and Latino women deemed "welfare mothers," take them off of federal social services and place them in the workplace. Instead, the lack of funding for re-training and the slow growth in industries that required lower educational levels made it virtually impossible for poor women of color to enter the workforce in any significant way except in the service and low-tech textile industries. Finally, the end of affirmative action policies for college admissions and public contracts

capped off a decade of rollbacks on civil rights that affected communities of color more than any other social group.

Rebuild LA and the Neoliberal City

In 1994 the city of Los Angeles sold the property at the intersection to the Los Angeles Harbor Department for 13.3 million dollars. Still unused, in July 1994 the Harbor Department granted the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank a permit to build and sustain a community garden. The LA Regional Food Bank, a private, non-profit food distribution network allocated garden plots to hundreds of families from throughout South Central Los Angeles to plant and garden on the 14 acres. Tezo, the co-representative for the South Central Farm, recalls the first couple of years of the farm:

> Right there. Where you see the two walnut trees…and there. Where you see all that corn. From there to there, nothing but broken glass and junk. Literally junk on the ground we are standing on…We created this place. My father and the other families that picked up glass, piece by piece. They created this place, planting seed by seed…They created this oasis.

Alberto, one of the young and spirited farm leaders, also recalls similar memories in an interview with *The New Standard*. He states, "It was completely wasteland. Nothing actually grew here. I remember my parents filling barrels and barrels of concrete and glass and metals." Most farmers remember the space before it matured into a flourishing community farm.

Yet, while the farm began to emerge out of the LARFB allocation of plots and the farmers clearing the land for cultivation, the city and the mayor's office continued to try to find a better use for the land. Mayor Richard Riordan, for instance, tried to pass a plan to create an industrial park on the farmland. With the support of the Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles, Riordan suggested building the industrial park as part of his extensive plan to industrialize further South Central Los Angeles and create more

service jobs for the depleted and unemployed population of South Central LA. The CCSC support of Riordan's plan suggests that the initial environmental concerns of the CCSC in the mid-1980s had switched to economic concerns over mass unemployment of Blacks. Since it was difficult to attract investment to South Central, many of these community groups jettisoned the environmental justice movement for increased economic opportunities. As novel as the idea may have been, groups like the CCSC integrated sponsorship and partnerships with corporate businesses that brought industries into the area that offered low wages and no health benefits. Moreover, instead of attracting businesses to hire Blacks in South Central, most of these businesses found no incentive to hire Blacks and instead recruited workers from the growing population of Mexican and Latino immigrants who they thought of as docile and vulnerable.

Ironically, the neglect of city officials and different neighborhood organizations, coupled with the long legal and political battles between the City of Los Angeles and the original owner of the Farm, opened the possibility for the construction of the farm. On one hand, early farming by the original community farmers was a temporary land use solution to a failed business opportunity for the city, several neighborhood groups, and the original owner. On the other hand, the farmers used this power struggle from above, as an opportunity to continue building the farm, changing the physical restrictions imposed by the Regional Food Bank, and the social restrictions imposed by a growing anti-immigrant discourse in Los Angeles.

THE SOUTH CENTRAL FARM STRUGGLE

This did not stop the original owner of the farm, Ralph Horowitz, and several city officials from finally deciding on a deal for the monetary transfer of the farm back to Horowitz in 2003. In a "backroom deal" between Horowitz and city manager Rocky

Delgadillo, the city sold the property back to Horowitz for less than half the original price the city paid for it in the late 1980s and several million dollars less than the market value of the property in 2003. A year after purchasing the land at a reduced price of five million dollars, on January 8, 2004, Ralph Horowitz handed the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank a letter revoking their permit to use the land and gave them a month and a half to vacate the land. Upon hearing the news that they had to vacate the property, the farmers filed a lawsuit against Horowitz, claiming the sale of the farm to be unlawful. They acquired a temporary injunction from the lawsuit until June 2005 when they lost their case in a court of appeals.

During the initial years of the South Central Farm struggle, the farm leadership and the farmers slowly opened their doors to outsiders. For the most part, only local neighbors and family members could have access to the farm. Groups and individuals who wanted to visit the farm needed to ask permission before they were allowed in. This was not an official stance by the farm but one that unofficially protected the *milpas* and farmers from strangers coming onto the property. As the farm started to grow in the public eye, the farmers and the farm leadership agreed that the farm would have to open its doors to supporters in order to survive.

By 2005 when Horowitz finally filed eviction papers, the South Central Farm had started to grow politically as an important property battle in Los Angeles. Elected mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who had previously served in the California legislature and as city councilman of District 13, visited the South Central Farm during his mayoral campaign and promised in front of dozens of farmers and spectators that, if elected, he would try to save the farm from its eventual demise. By all accounts that I received, most farmers believed early on that the increasingly powerful Latino political leadership in Los Angeles, with Villaraigosa as their main symbol, would protect the interests of the

farmers and the growing Latino community. But it became evident that the Latino leadership, including Villaraigosa, would not take a political stance against what was basically a private property dispute. Conflicts dealing with private property in Los Angeles are closely tied to the dominant racial and economic order of the region. Mike Davis (1990) argues that private property ownership and protection became an anxiety of white suburban families throughout much of the 1970s, 1980s, and the 1990s. White middle-class families who were able to escape the de-industrialization of the 1970s and 1980s and move to predominately white gated suburban neighborhoods, politically mobilized against racially integrating their neighborhoods and using their real estate taxes to pay for social services and educational costs for schools in the inner city.

Public awareness of the farm struggle battled between empathizing with the farm and the farmers and supporting the basic tenets of private property ownership. Much of this debate was framed within hot-button discourses over immigration and the tensions between a growing Mexican and Latino population in South Central Los Angeles and the Black community in South Central. Because the farm leadership needed to navigate these social minefields in order to gain wide-spread support, many of their political strategies included relying to some extent on the political and legal process.

Several times, internal contradictions and arguments between farmers, the farm leadership, and supporters reached the daily news, causing for an immense amount of energy to be spent trying to win the all important public opinion of Los Angeles. Articles suggesting that the farm leadership was mishandling money came out in local newspapers. Most of these allegations were fabricated causing the farm to focus much of their organizing energies on keeping their supporters from forgetting about their struggle.

In early March 2006, Horowitz finally handed the farmers their eviction notice. The struggle to save the farm took on a defensive posture to ensure its survival. Soon

after the eviction papers were signed, the farm leadership and farm supporters started a massive organizing effort to protect the farm from eviction and eventual destruction. This included organizing sleepovers at the farm and 24-hour surveillance in case of a possible eviction. Hundreds of people arrived to the farm. Many of them stationed themselves temporarily on the farm, willing to be arrested if necessary. High profile environmentalists and Hollywood actors came to support the farm. Of the high profile supporters, environmentalists Julia Butterfly and John Quigley, actress Daryl Hannah, and singer Joan Baez, agreed to a tree sit-in in May 2006. Their high profile status brought national and international attention to the farm. In the meantime, the city of Los Angeles claimed to pursue avenues to purchase the land and avoid the destruction of the farm.

Horowitz decided, however, to sell the land for 16 million dollars, well above the price he paid for it in 2003. Mayor Villaraigosa found a just suitor in the Trust for Public Land group who agreed to put half of the money for the purchase if the city could find the other half. After stalling for much of the spring, the city announced that it had come up with the money to purchase back the land but this time, Horowitz had decided not to sell the land back to the city. Horowitz stated personal reasons for not selling the land back to the city. Although the legality of the 2003 sale of the farm was still in the courts, on June 13, 2006, a joint operation between the LA County Sheriff's Department and the Los Angeles Police Department entered the farm by force and arrested dozens of farm supporters inside and outside of the farm. Daryl Hannah, John Quigley, and a co-elected representative of the farm, Rufina Juarez, were arrested while tree-sitting in the two walnut trees near the main entrance of the farm. A month later, on July 5, 2006, the farm was bulldozed and cleared completely.

"LIFE WORLDS": FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN THE TRANSNATIONAL BARRIO

The following two sections are ethnographic examples of the everyday forms of alternate de-colonial social relations produced clandestinely under the veil of the contemporary "panoptic city."

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The first time I took the Alameda exit on the I-10 Santa Ana/Santa Monica West freeway in Downtown LA and made my first left onto Alameda Avenue towards South Central, I reflected on the overwhelming amount of industry that makes up most of the peripheral areas of corporate downtown Los Angeles. Although most geographers and scholars writing on the US metropolitan city agree that during the late 1960's and 1970's most urban cities underwent, to varying degrees, some form of deindustrialization, facilitating the rise of what some call the post-Fordist, post-Keynesian, or neoliberal city (If you are going to make these references you should cite the authors who use this language.) where industries closed their doors and moved to much cheaper out-sourced labor in the Global South, Los Angeles both de-industrialized traditional labor sectors like the automobile, aviation, and heavy machinery industries for hi-tech industries placed outside of the urban core and reindustrialized these abandoned spaces with a flexible service and textile industry. El Sereno and East LA had similar landscapes where urban maquiladoras hired a mostly female and immigrant labor force to work long hours for low pay to produce the designer clothing worn by an upwardly mobile consumer class. These communities are connected by railroad tracks and a long stretch of roads and freeways to facilitate in the transport of goods from the western ports of Los Angeles. By turning left on Alameda, I was also only five minutes away from the high-rises of Los Angeles' high-rise and the adjacent *callejones* in downtown LA that sold garments and low-end products at cheap prices.

As I headed down Alameda, I noticed the sea of warehouses filled with idle diesel semi-trucks from all over the country ready to carry new consumer products to far away final destinations. Although local environmental justice groups have had some success pressuring the city government to lower the smog emissions of these trucks and factories, the communities that make up the greater South Central Los Angeles area are also some of the most polluted in the city. Air pollution from airplanes, automobiles, and trucks are just one source of pollution. Toxic dumping is a common occurrence in communities of color and was part of my experience growing up on the former industrialized West side of Berkeley, California and later in the cancer zones of Richmond's oil and chemical refineries. These experiences demonstrated how these contaminated areas are closely related to and interwoven within the racial hierarchies of the region.

the warehouses that line Alameda and their moving merchandise, make this particular area in Los Angeles one of the most sought after pieces of real estate in the world. For whoever owned and developed the distribution points that collected imported goods from abroad and exported them across the country, held an immense amount of power and wealth in the region. Indeed, the Alameda industrial corridor, has symbolized two overarching trends in Los Angeles: the synergy between city officials, real estate developers, and multi-national corporations, and the resulting deindustrialization, and reindustrialization of Los Angeles. In 2002, this synergy developed the Alameda corridor as an interconnected extension of several free trade/tax free zones. Traditionally these free trade/tax free zones have facilitated the import and export of goods through common ports of entry like national borders, seaports, and airports. The 2002 Alameda Corridor Plan, on the other hand, was conceived as a multi-million dollar infrastructural plan to make trade more efficient and rapid through the creation of a railroad expressway that runs underground and through adjacent neighborhoods, mostly poor, working class, at

speeds in excess of 50 miles per hour. This is done in order to increase the time by which imported and exported goods left the ports of Los Angeles to other parts of the region, state, and country. Aihwa Ong, writing on the neoliberalization of East Asia contends, "Market-driven logic induces the coordination of political policies with the corporate interests, so that developmental decisions favor the fragmentation of the national space into various noncontiguous zones, and promote the differential regulation of populations who can be connected to or disconnected from global circuits of capital" (Ong, 2006: 77). Although Ong was not referring to the ghettos and barrios of Los Angeles, I would argue that this rule applies to the inner city, except the example of Los Angeles demonstrates that it is not merely market-driven logics that dictate methods of governability in these noncontiguous zones but also racialized gendered logics and hierarchies.

Moreover, such rapid and efficient movement of capital and goods running along the Alameda corridor only accentuates the mass human inequalities that exist adjacent to these trade circuits. While much of the industrial real estate property that lines the Alameda corridor is considered some of the most sought after property in the region, the communities that border the corridor are seen as some of the poorest, most violent, underdeveloped, and disenfranchised areas in the United States. Inhabited mostly by a rapidly growing waged and unwaged working class Mexican, Latino migrant, and Black population, the different populations and communities that make up South Central Los Angeles have been impacted greatly, albeit differently, by the constant changes made to the corridor in order to make it more efficient and rapid for capital's growth and expansion.

Reflecting on the fact that for most of my life I grew up under the shadows of similar environmental conditions in Richmond, California,[35] I continued my way through this urban concrete jungle, sociologically and popularly referred to as the "ghetto," and soon arrived to 41st and Alameda. In stark contrast to the warehouses, smog, and diesel fumes, my senses quickly took me to the out of place images and smells of *nopales*, *maíz*, *árboles de guayaba*, *epazote*, *calabaza*, *papayas* and other plants exotic to Los Angeles and California. Surrounded by a rusty chain link fence that covered the full city block of fourteen acres, I stood in front of 320 garden plots of land, arguably the "largest urban garden in the United States," the South Central Farm in Vernon, California.

South Central Farmers selling their produce at the local Farmers Market
(Source: www.southcentralfarmers.com)

[35] Growing up in Richmond, California, my family and I were exposed daily to the airborne chemicals that often escaped the Chevron oil refineries along the northeast bay area and the chemical factories that stood adjacent. This type of environmental racism afflicted mostly Latino and African American families with various physical and mental health problems ranging from asthma to cases of cancer. This does not include the visual impact of growing up in the shadows of the refineries and factories which during the early mornings could be seen in the distance spewing smoke and fire into the sky.

On this hot sunny Sunday morning, I sat down at one of the many food stands that sold *quesadillas*, bowls of *pozole*, *pupusas*, and fresh fruit juices from the many fruit trees in the garden. Next to the food stands, farmers sold and bartered their fresh produce to local community members who arrived to buy fresh lettuce, carrots, turnips, and medicinal herbs found only in Mesoamerican markets in Mexico and Central America. I started thinking over my meal how food availability was such a crucial issue in the barrio; most markets in the inner city that do exist have less variety than the grocery stores of more affluent neighborhoods. When cost, taste, appearance, and time preparation are factored in for poor and working class families, unhealthy, over-processed, pre-prepared foods are often the only alternatives to long hours of food preparation and selection. There are of course many more reasons why families in the inner city choose food staples high in sugar, starches, and fat than just preparation time. What is important here to note is that such limited choices for families coupled with the shrinking ability to prepare and purchase food -- symbolic of an efficient consumption-based society -- have devalued many traditional cultural practices that value the multi-layered process of food and food preparation.

The stark contrasts between food centers in the urban barrio and in other more affluent places represents the relationship between consumption, life and death, and the spatial ordering and classification of populations based on race and class in Los Angeles, California. This spatial ordering bases itself on providing the greatest availability and diversity of options to those populations, invoking Michel Foucault's (2003) discussion on racism, chosen to survive and flourish by limiting the food options for those deemed to die. Historically, whites and more affluent groups have disproportionately benefited from these racial and social arrangements of hierarchies in Los Angeles.

Out of curiosity, I wanted to know if places like the South Central Farm offered an alternative outlook to food, nutrition, culture, and life, than the grocery stores I frequently visited for my own food. I was also concerned with the relationship between self-subsistence and social movements. On one particular day, I approached a farmer who I had met at several gatherings at the farm. She was one of the more vocal and outspoken farmers and I could tell many in the farm looked up to her by the number of people that greeted her daily. She was watering her lettuce patches when I approached her quietly. After greeting her and again introducing myself, she recognized me by my stature. "*O si, ya me recuerdo. El grandecito que estaba con Roberto la vez pasada*." She recalled my last visit with Roberto Flores from the Eastside Café and I quickly answered with agreement. I didn't want to seem overbearing, especially since many farmers enjoyed their time watering plants, planting seeds, and picking weeds as an alternative time that allowed them some distance and respite from the loud noises of the streets and the long grueling hours of work.

Moreover, I was not interested in gathering data for my dissertation but curious about what it meant to farm in the middle of one of the toughest urban areas in the country. My family had migrated from the rural town of Acambaro, Guanajuato in the mid-1960s and our connection to farming slowly diminished as we embraced urban living and witnessed the drastic changes to rural life in Mexico during the late 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s following neoliberal reforms that incapacitated rural life in Mexico. Yet my family and our Mexican neighbors found alternative ways to work with the land by growing and taking care of lavish gardens with medical plants and flowers they remembered from their own childhoods.

The farmer started conversing with me, establishing a connection I was hesitant to initiate. After talking about several medicinal plants that I recognized from my mother's

garden, I asked her a question concerning the distance she must travel in order to reach the nearest grocery store or botany:

Pablo: *Y si tenían que comprar la comida en el mercado?*

Farmer: *Está cara la comida. Por aquí no tienen Super cerca. ¿Y no has visto el precio? Es muy caro. Y no tienen mi savila, mi tomatillos, ni mi ojas de aguacate para la presión*.

She put down the water hose and takes a couple of plants I identified as chamomile and lifted them to my nose.

Farmer: *Es la manzanilla. Para los nervios. Ten llevate una bolsita*.

I smiled and took the small Chinese food labeled plastic bag and thought, "She must know I'm a graduate student if she knew to give me the plants for my nerves."

I asked: *Yo no veo tantas tiendas para comprar comida. ¿Que tan lejos esta el Super?*

Farmer: *No! De aquí se necesita dos camiones. Y eso que m'ijo tiene troca*.

We conversed for five more minutes about how to prepare some of the medicinal plants and I again thanked her for the chamomile.

The farmer I spoke to emphasized that the price of the food was too expensive and that most of the supermarkets were far from most farmers who lived near the farm. When asked how far the supermarket was, she responded that it took at least two buses to arrive to the nearest market. Although her son had a truck, making it easy for her family to travel to a supermarket, what is important to note is the lack of resources for people living in the inner city, especially for something as fundamental as food and medicinal alternatives to the high priced medicines sold at pharmacies and corporate food sold at large chain supermarkets.

Most residents of South Central LA identify transportation as an important part of their economic survival. For instance, Blacks living in South Central LA during the forties, fifties, and sixties, found sufficient transportation to manufacturing industries because of the proximity of the industries to their communities. After the decentralization of industries from the inner city to the suburbs of Los Angeles and to places outside of the United States, Black working class men and women found it more difficult to reach the new post-Fordist jobs in the service industries and high-end jobs in the growing aeronautic industries of the suburbs (Sides, 2006). The lack of infrastructural investment in the inner city, or divestment, during the 1970s and 1980s, not only resulted in the loss of employment opportunities, but also the noticeably strategic lack of efficient public transportation and affordable food and food distribution centers. In their absence, the inner city became known as an area filled with high cost liquor stores and limited spaces where residents could find medicinal, nutritious and diverse food sources.

As I spoke with this South Central farmer, she frequently wove a discussion of the plants she farmed within our larger conversation. Lifting the chamomile to my nose and handing me a bag full of medicinal plants represented a connection to her small plot of land that was both verbal and physical but very much cultural. As anthropologists have suggested, these culture-based forms of knowledge production are formed through the process of building transnational communities that even during physical migration preserve and carry these cultural knowledge's so as to make their new social landscapes familiar and also re-create community through this non-commodified exchange of knowledge (Peña, 2005; Peña, 2006; Esteva and Prakash, 1998).

In this case, the plants she grew and watered were not for any substantial monetary gain nor were they simply for herself and her family. They are symbolic of the unique ways migrant populations preserve traditional cultural practices and sustain social

relations that are not so easily attached or based on the prevailing logic of capitalism. The preservation of such unique sets of social relations that are virtually impossible to measure scientifically or statistically are tied to what I suggest are existing struggles across the globe for food sovereignty.

The struggle for food sovereignty is fundamentally the belief in "life and health" rather than "death and disease." It is the struggle for what Mariarosa Dalla Costa describes as, "people's right to produce their own food, the right to a variety of foods rather than having standardized, highly-processed foods imposed on them, the product of the industrial concept of food production and of the specialization by geographical areas in the neo-liberal globalization of the markets" (Dalla Costa, 2004). Food sovereignty in the inner city pertains to the right of communities to live in healthy environments and have the access and right to healthy food. The South Central Farm provided a viable option for fresh and affordable food for hundreds of families in South Central. It is also a nearby option for many who have to travel a long way to buy their food. Moreover, food sovereignty is a struggle to change the spatial landscape of the inner city.

Demanding the right to produce one's own food and have access to a variety of foods is just one aspect of food sovereignty. The construction of community gardens and other environmental friendly spaces in the inner city is reshaping the contours of inner city life. These common spaces are recuperating the remnants of various public spaces that used to exist in Los Angeles. These public spaces, hidden in the interstitial areas of the sprawling urban complex, were places to meet and gather. Such places like dance halls during the 1940s or makeshift urban centers for different people to co-exist are long gone due to the spatial re-arrangement of racialized poor and working class populations in Los Angeles that limited the movement of these populations. The garden becomes a

place for people to interact with one another, share stories and news, and grow food for their families and neighbors.

From the view of the dominant racial regimes of the region, the inner city is the wasteland of the city. It warehouses, interns, concentrates, and encloses those not fit to survive and therefore the least deserving of social aid. This inhabits a particular social logic that underpins much of Los Angeles history.

As a logic of social organization, white supremacy is scaffolded by technologies of killing that sediment in definition of racism, recalling histories of militarized mass-based liquidation as well as normalized and institutionalized forms of racial population control and targeted decimation, including limited or no access to shelter, nutrition, and health care. The inaccessibility of these basic necessities is at the heart of struggles for food sovereignty. These struggles contest the racial ordering of Los Angeles by offering non-white racialized subjects in the inner city the opportunity and security of basic healthy foods that are not as easily accessible to most inner city dwellers.

From the perspective of capital, for instance, the use of the farm for the purpose of self-sustenance is a form of "false productivity," or as I argue, death, that must be captured, enclosed, and managed only by the standards and logics of the global market. Capital's optimal solution, in this case, is the recovery of the 14-acres of land and preparing it for the construction of another warehouse or factory along the Alameda industrial corridor, a worthy alternative that gives life to commerce and capital's growth. This would guarantee and facilitate the efficiency of trade and production, crucial to the continued production and exploitation endemic to neoliberal capitalism.

The farm is seen as a "false/dead" use of space because capital has failed to manage and control the innovative forms of social co-production and social relations that are not dependent on the "life-giving" market form. The State, in this example, is not a

silent partner of either the farmers and the SCLA community or the real estate developers, but instead tries to make sense of the farm in terms of broadening its neoliberal use to include other alternatives, albeit dictated by the market. These include, using part of the space for a community park or changing the farm's democratic and collective character to vertical forms of political bureaucracy. It's in fact a slower death that the State offers.

The struggle for food sovereignty questions the conjoined logic of the State and capital by self-determining what is best for the survival of a given population. In the case of a racialized and class based society, whites benefit greatly from the racial hierarchies of the region. They facilitate the co-production of social relations that shape urban landscapes within the prevailing logic of the panoptic city (Peña, 2005; Davis, 1990). The South Central Farm and the farmers that grew food on the fourteen-acres of land are by-products of this transnational struggle for food sovereignty. Through their practice of traditional farming methods and their ability to produce healthy food for their families and communities, the South Central farmers are rejecting and redefining racial capitalist notions of "productivity."

Reciprocity and Gift Giving

Irma,[36] an elderly indigenous woman from Oaxaca, works on her garden plot, pulling weeds and making sure her plants are watered. Her 2-year old grandson holds on to her leg while she attempts to kneel several times to pick up the uprooted weeds. She seems to not mind the suffocating smog that surrounds her. The oxygen produced by her small plot and the other plots next to her counteract the heavy smog's effect. She looks over to the table next to her garden plot, where I am enjoying a cup of *jamaica*, and says

[36] pseudonym

to me, "*Siempre hay esmog. Pero aqui en mi milpa, siempre estoy agusto!*" I nod in agreement and respond by rubbing my irritated eyes and wiping the sweat from my forehead with a bandana. With the sounds of *Jarocho* music in the distance, I listen to her talk to her grandson in broken Spanish and a Mexican indigenous language I later find out is Zapotec, presumably telling him to let go of her leg so she can bend down further and pick up the weeds. Her grandson seems to understand her clearly but still holds on to her leg. I believe it's because I keep making funny faces towards him in order to make him smile. Hector[37], a local carpenter in his mid-40s and originally from the state of Jalisco, walks by the picnic table I am sitting at, looks at me, and smiles, as if to pass a daily greetings without words. I reciprocate the gesture by nodding and smiling as well, and proceed to take a large gulp of my freshly made "*agua de Jamaica*." Hector finally speaks and greets Irma, "*Buenos dias Doña Irma!*" She replies, "*Buenas, Don Hector. Con que le sirvo?*" As they continue exchanging greetings, in the distance, the sounds of horns coming from the railroad tracks cover the area for several seconds. I notice three sets of sounds, the *jaraneras/os* playing near the food booths, the sound of the electric rail system, or the MTA, that transports people throughout most of LA, and the heavy trains that carry what seems like mile-long cargo from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to the interior. I overhear Doña Irma tell Hector. "*Esperate un segundito Don Hector, es que los trenes más y más hacen ruido*." They both patiently wait for the sound to subside and proceed with their conversation. I try not to pry in their discussion but I become more and more interested in their topic of conversation. Hector explains to Doña Irma that he recently lost his job at a nearby furniture warehouse because his boss found out he was using false residency papers. He tells her, his boss, a

[37] Pseudonym

white man who hired exclusively Mexican, and more recently, Central American migrants, many of them undocumented, worried that his furniture warehouse would be targeted by the ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and sanctioned for hiring undocumented workers. Doña Irma asks him, "*y como le haces para vivir*?" I notice Hector stutter for a bit, trying to find the words to answer her question. Doña Irma breaks the long wait and says to Hector, "*mira, dejame darte unas plantas y frutas para llevarte.*" Hector, looks my way and feels a bit embarrassed taking the vegetables and fruits Doña Irma gives him and adds, "*Muchas gracias Dona Irma, si quieres, te construyo una mesita y silla para tu milpa*." They both are in agreement and Hector promises to come back to finish the table and chair.

***

> My plans are market-driven. When we get the property back, we're going to determine what the viable use is depending on the market conditions, and we'll do that. If someone was in need of a manufacturing plant or a warehouse, we'd do that for them. (Real estate developer Ralph Horowitz describing the future use of the 14-acre South Central Farm.)
>
> If you were to be brought here blindfolded, you would guess that you were miles and miles away from a city. But we're surrounded by factories. (words by 19-year old farmer Alberto Tlatoa to describe the South Central Farm in Los Angeles, California.)

Market-driven social relations are increasingly focused on reinforcing logics of governance that reward individualism versus collectivism. They produce social relations that are based on individual competition and that discourage mutual aid and cooperation, the tenets of community building. They value individual rights over collective rights and protect the rights of property owning individuals over collective concepts of land ownership.

On the other hand, the example of the *tianguis* and the everyday interactions between farmers, counters the individualism invested in competition and private property ownership. The farm, as a common space, is co-produced only through daily interactions between farmers and visitors. They use mutuality and cooperation in order to share resources and wisdom in order to survive the exploitative workplace of the free-market capitalist environment.

A large percentage of the farmers at the SCF have first hand experienced the repercussions of decades of neoliberal economic reforms in their countries. Upon arrival to Los Angeles, they then face similar reforms that enclose them to a narrow low-waged labor industry. The intensity of policing methods to regulate undocumented migration into the United States provides another method of enclosure for this marginalized population. These factors contribute to the constant battle between individualism and mutual cooperation that immigrants often navigate unsuccessfully.

The South Central Farm offers a unique alternative to the consumer society of most urban cities. It offers farmers the ability to practice traditional methods of farming that have all but been displaced in their countries of origin. Through the farmers markets, farmers and nearby neighbors can come and participate in the preparation and consumption of food, not as assembly line consumption, but as a cultural practice. In the case of Irma and Hector, there is mutual support in the sharing of food from the devastating consequences of recent anti-immigrant policing methods that employers have found beneficial in order to pay or not pay workers their just wages. Hector's response to such mutual aid help from Irma is to offer her his services not in an uneven or exploitative capitalist relationship but in one that brings mutual understanding and stronger bonds between Irma, her family, and Hector and his family.

THE TAKEOVER AND DESTRUCTION OF THE SOUTH CENTRAL FARM

June 13th, 1006 Los Angeles County Sherriffs enter the South Central Farm
(Source: www.southcentralfarmers.com)

On June 13th, 2006 I arrived to my parents' house in Richmond, California at 2 a.m. in the morning. I usually drove after sundown to visit my family in Northern California because there was less traffic at night leaving Los Angeles. I had slept no less than three hours when my mother walked into my room and passed me the phone. It was Sirena, a member of the eastside café coordinating committee, calling from her home in Northridge. "Pablo. I just received word that Sheriff and police officers have entered the farm." The news was confirmed by several text messages to my cell phone from the South Central Farm leadership. The organizers and supporters of the farm had set up a mass text message alert system that could at any moment send text message alerts and information in case the eviction papers were finally served. The first text message stated, "The Farm is being raided. We need as many people to 41st and Alameda as soon as

possible." Several other text messages arrived from the alert system and from other friends who had started receiving the news. I started forwarding the text messages to people in Los Angeles as well as other comrades across the United States. I was still very tired from a six-hour drive but the sudden news of the farm being raided felt like a jolt of adrenaline in my system. My first reaction was to start calling everyone I could, and ask them to head towards the farm. The Farm support committee had also started a grassroots phone tree that many of us participated in. Those who were signed up to make phone calls had a set number of people to call and with a specific message to give them. The strategy behind the text messages and phone calls was to make direct contact with Farm supporters who over the years had signed up to arrive at the farm in case of its sudden eviction or destruction. Though most people were still asleep at 5 or 6 in the morning, many of them asked what they could start doing to help.

As the sun started rising, I plugged in my laptop and began sending mass e-mails to alternative media collectives, list-serves, and individuals across the country and globe. In a matter of minutes, I started receiving responses from New York, Austin, Raleigh-Durham, Oaxaca City, San Cristobal de las Casas, and Caracas, for more information on the takeover of the farm.

The South Central Farm leadership sent out an e-mail detailing what people could do to support the farm during the takeover. The e-mail asked people to come to the farm as observers. It also asked that those that couldn't come to the farm, to send letters and make phone calls to Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, the disputed owner of the land, Ralph Horowitz, and the district city council representative Jan Perry, in support of the farm and in outrage to the use of police force to evict farmers and their supporters.

I was sure that the mainstream media would cover the story and so I went to several on-line media sites to see if they had live coverage of the takeover. The NBC

affiliate in Los Angeles had the best early coverage of the mass mobilization of fully armed police forces and the arriving protesters to the farm. Although the Los Angeles media spinned the story to save the farm several times, focusing primarily on the famous tree sitters, Daryl Hannah, John Quigley, Julia Butterfly, and Joan Baez, they were more observers of the takeover, focusing on the mass militarization that was taking place.

From the on-line feed to the farm, taken from one of the many media helicopters, I was able to see the concentration of dozens of police officers in patrol cars, motorcycles, and on foot, escorting several firefighter groups into the farm. The firefighters were used to cut the chains linked to many of the protesters inside the farm. They also were in charge of bringing the tree sitters down from the two black walnut trees on the Long Beach avenue side of the farm. I started sending emails and text messages describing the early scenes of the takeover and where the police seemed more concentrated in numbers. Many supporters of the farm later admitted that these early updates were helpful in terms of avoiding areas where the riot-geared police were mobilizing themselves.

LA Sherriff with tear gas rifle
(Source: www.southcentralfarmers.com)

As more and more farm supporters started to arrive to the farm, I received a call from Laura P.[38] at around 8:30 am. She had arrived at the farm several minutes before with Gerardo[39]. Both of them were headed to one of the corners of the farm in order to observe from the outside the conduct of the police inside the farm. I could tell from her voice that their idea to observe safely from outside of the farm did not go as planned. Her voice clearly sounded distraught, "Pablo, they are taking Gerardo away. We didn't do anything. We were just standing on the corner and they pushed Gerardo to the ground." I could tell Laura was crying and I tried to write down as much information as I

[38] Laura P. is a well known Chicana/Mexicana community organizer in Los Angeles and co-founder of El Puente Hacia La Esperanza, a collective dedicated to . She is also a member of the Eastside Café Echospace and the Autonomous Peoples Collective in Los Angeles, California.

[39] Gerardo is a member of the Autonomous Peoples Collective and a Homeless People's Rights activist and social worker in Skid row (a downtown Los Angeles area known for its high population of people without homes).

could to pass down to everyone via e-mail and phone. While I was writing down what I could, I heard Laura beg the police officers to stop beating and handcuffing Gerardo to the ground. She cried, "Please, he didn't do anything! We were just standing here! Please stop hurting him!" In the distance, I heard what Gerardo later admitted were his cries of pain from being pushed down to the pavement by the LAPD. Gerardo later described the early hours of the takeover and his confrontation with the Los Angeles Police Department,

> As Laura and I were on our way to the farm on the corner of Alameda and MLK, I came across some officers who informed me that they weren't letting anyone pass. I showed them my bus pass and told them that I had to go to work. As I walk forward, about 5 police officers surrounded me and two tried to handcuff me. I kept telling them that I was going to the bus stop to catch my bus. At that moment, the 5 officers threw me to the ground and handcuffed me. They placed me in the back of the police car for like 15 minutes. They asked me if I have any warrants and if I have any tattoos. I told them that I never been arrested and I don't have any tattoos. The officer Becerra said that I did a 148, which is disobeying an officer and that could have placed me in jail for a year. Once they realize that my record was clean they let me go. I have a scratch on my left elbow, my left shoulder feels like it was dislocated and I have a sore neck. (Gerardo)

News reached people that police officers were using excessive force on the arriving supporters of the farm. I started receiving word from witnesses outside of the farm that police forces inside the farm were swabbing chained protesters with pepper spray in their eyes. Bolt cutters were used to cut chains off from protesters. They were then dragged outside of the farm and into police detaining trucks.

Protesters are detained on the corner of 41st and Alameda by LAPD
(Source: www.southcentralfarmers.com)

Many of the protesters had taken civil disobedience courses that several activist groups held during the months prior to the takeover. The training involved how to safely resist arrest in a non-violent way. These non-violent methods include: making your body limp so that police officers have a tougher time dragging you out of the farm and covering and protecting other protesters from police batons and other forms of abuse.

Protesters arrived throughout the day, taking over key intersections surrounding the 13 acre farm. They stopped traffic long enough to stop the flow of trucks that service the industrial corridor daily. Riot geared police officers moved in on protesters at different times during the day, arresting those that were sitting in the middle of the intersections. After an entire day of confrontations between the police and protesters, the police were finally able to secure the farm, expelling and arresting those inside.

After the Takeover

The police takeover of the farm and the arrests of dozens of farm supporters appeared at first glance to squelch the movement to save the farm. The farm was now under 24-hour surveillance by a local security company that hired several young black males to protect the farm from trespassers. Police surveillance of the farm perimeter did not seem to increase after the raids, presumably thinking that the farmers and their supporters would go away quietly. The exact opposite occurred.

Soon after the takeover of the farm, the farmers began meeting outside the perimeter and held nightly candlelit vigils around the farm. Many of the farm supporters constructed a small kitchen and office on the Long Beach and Martin Luther King corner of the farm and the second stage of the struggle to save the farm began.

Although many of the farmers were not able to enter the farm and water their plants or pick up any of their belongings that they had left behind, some were able to take plants, soil, and seeds from inside and use it to start planting in the soil just outside of the barbed wire chain link fence that surrounded the farm. Others, who had their plots near the fence, tried watering their plots from outside with water hoses. Every night after the takeover, dozens of people came to the farm and participated in a series of events culminating in the daily vigil prayer and walk around the farm. The vigils lasted almost three weeks until bulldozers were called in to destroy the farm in early July, 2006.

The Bulldozing of the Farm

Remains of the South Central Farm after it was bulldozed on July 5th, 2006

On July 5, 2006, just days after the historic and controversial presidential election in Mexico and a sleepy three-day July 4th weekend in Los Angeles, I sat on the curb across from the South Central Farm in Vernon California, between two cars parked on 41st and Alameda, underneath a small sliver of shade, feeling defeated and on the verge of a heatstroke, trying to gather my thoughts, to put the pieces together. The hot pavement moved every so often as semi-trucks passed by the Alameda corridor at speeds varying from 40 to 50 miles an hour, heading in and out of the sea of industrial warehouses and packaging plants that line most of the streets and avenues in Vernon. An occasional honk of their horn in solidarity could be heard throughout the day. Others yelled obscenities out the window. "Why don't you go back where you came from?" I overhead people yell several times; a reminder of the recent xenophobic anti-immigrant attacks on Mexicana/os and Latinas/os throughout the United States. I kept taking sips of warm water from my water bottle to help with the sudden bursts of dizziness. I felt my

eyes red from dehydration and weeping. The back of my neck burned from the sun's rays. I wet my bandana several times with a bit of water and placed it on the back of my neck. I felt the drops of water running down my back, cooling me slightly. I looked down at my left hand and saw that it was cut in different places on both sides from grabbing and pulling on the rusty fence that encircled the farm across the street. My right hand had several splinters from carrying one end of a wooden bench that a few of us used to stand on earlier in the morning to look inside the farm from outside the barbed wire fence.

Farm supporters included myself watch the bulldozing of the farm

My head started leaning down towards my knees. I began thinking and remembering how just several months prior to its demolition, the farm was lush with fruits, vegetables, trees, and medicinal plants from all over the world. A garden where farmers from all over the Americas cultivated their small plot of land, planting seasonal vegetables to sell during the weekend farmers market; where visitors from every

continent would come and enjoy fresh tamales, pozole, tacos, and quesadillas on a Sunday afternoon and produce picked daily from the over 320 plots of land; where children danced to the sounds of *jaranas* playing *sones* from Veracruz, Santa Anna, and East Los Angeles. In the evenings, political documentaries from Chiapas, Oaxaca, El Salvador, Brazil, and other places throughout the world screened for the farmers and visitors to make connections between the farm and movements throughout the world.

These memories ran circles inside my head as just across the street, several feet from the curb, a dozen or so people stood outside of the farm yelling at the security guards inside. The young teenage African American guards had been hired soon after the police takeover of the farm on June 13, 2008 in order to protect the seized land from protesters attempting to retake the farm. It became apparent that the use of young African American males to guard the farm was a specific strategy used by the owner and police department in order to play these communities against each other and capitalize on the tensions within racialized ethnic groups that have increased over the last two decades in South Central Los Angeles.

The deafening sound of the small caterpillar bulldozer stopped momentarily from wrecking havoc. Ripping, breaking, twisting, uprooting, stomping, and trampling the immense diversity of plants and fauna that grew inside the farm. Scattered between the fallen cactus and sugar cane, you could see family mementos on the ground that one of the over three hundred migrant families that had a plot of land inside the farm left behind. The sound of the bulldozer coupled with the repeated horns of cars and trucks passing by, the sirens of several police cars and one or two police helicopters that patrolled the area left my head pounding. Moments before my sudden refuge from the noise along the curb of Alameda and 41st, I witnessed the beating of several young men and women anarchists of color from the local Copwatch LA group by security guards and LAPD

officers. They entered the farm through several openings in the outside fence along Martin Luther King Blvd and jumped onto the bulldozer, picking up several vegetables they found on the ground and placing them inside the bulldozer's gas tank, temporarily ending its rampage. At the time of the beatings, I was on my cell phone being interviewed by an old friend who had a weekly alternative radio show on KPFA in Berkeley, California. Simultaneously videotaping the incident from just outside the barb wired fence that covered the entire city block, I witnessed the senseless beating and arrest of those brave enough to stop the bulldozer's manhandling of the urban oasis. By late evening on July 6, 2008 the farm was cleared of its once flourishing fauna, left barren for everyone passing by on Alameda Avenue to see the consequences of contesting the neoliberal hegemonic order in Los Angeles.

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Postcolonial African theorist, Achille Mbembe, discussing the role of violence in the modern colonial relationship between Israel and Palestine, describes the Israeli occupation of and violence against Palestinian cities, as a form of "infrastructural warfare." Mbembe states:

> Critical to these techniques of disabling the enemy is bulldozing: demolishing houses and cities; uprooting olive trees; riddling water tanks with bullets; bombing and jamming electronic communications; digging up roads; destroying electricity transformers; tearing up airport runways; disabling television and radio transmitters; smashing computers; ransacking cultural and politico-bureaucratic symbols of the proto-Palestinian state; looting medical equipment. In other words, infrastructural warfare. While the Apache helicopter gunship is used to police the air and to kill from overhead, the armored bulldozer (the Caterpillar D-9) is used on the ground as a weapon of war and intimidation. In contrast to early-modern colonial occupation, these two weapons establish the superiority of high tech tools of late modern terror (Mbembe, 2003:29).

Although, the South central farm bulldozing is not the same as the everyday forms of infrastructural warfare waged against Palestinian families in the West Bank or Gaza, I

argue that the bulldozing of the farm, coupled with the police takeover equates to a similar process of modern neo-colonial occupation and extermination, where spaces occupied and collectively shard by racialized populations in the inner city are perceived as "death worlds," a concept coined by Mbembe in his formulation of a necropolitics in modern postcoloniality. Populations living within these "death worlds" are given the label, "the living dead" because they are not afforded the same rights to life of other populations. In this case, the state and corporate forging of ideas surrounding the protection of "private property rights" in Los Angeles are perceived as affording and protecting "life." In contrast, the collective use of space, and the making of cultural place, as in the case of the South Central Farm, is perceived as a false use of property, or operating as a producer of "death."

Invoking Critical Race theorist Cheryl Harris' (1993) argument, private property took on the racial appearance of "whiteness" only after the extermination and displacement of Native peoples and the legal codification of enslaved Africans as "property." After the end of slavery in the United States, property rights took on a different racial character that privileged white males as private property owners over women and blacks. In order to police and secure private property ownership, a formidable policing and terror apparatus was built necessary for the protection of these rights. This terror apparatus stripped the commons of racialized communities and kept non-white communities in a constant state of fear.

The early 20th century history of Los Angeles follows this narrative, as scholars on race agree that from its initial Anglo settlement the Los Angeles white ruling class sought to separate and displace Mexican, Black, and Native populations and instead create a utopian white city, different than the pluri-ethnic industrial cities of the North. Therefore, in LA, "neoliberal white supremacy" or "the possessive investment in

whiteness,, as it is called by George Lipsitz (1998), is a marker of life and hope versus the death and despair of the inner city.

Violence, and state violence in particular, operates through the management and control of racialized populations through war machines that police "death worlds", where the racialized inhabitants of these geographically determined dead zones are criminalized and deemed expendable within the racial, economic and gendered regimes of such places as Los Angeles, Gaza, post-Katrina New Orleans.

The corporate-sponsored war machines that operate in the barrios and ghettos of LA function by brute force and under the guise of lawful violence and removal. They are capable of demolishing, terrorizing, and destroying the social co-creations of racialized groups living in these spaces only by gaining or invoking a popular consensus concerned with "law and order." In this case, intersecting discourses of a post 9/11 "War on Terror," the resurgence of anti-immigrant hysteria, and the sensationalist stories of Black and Brown conflicts in Los Angeles, help frame multiple pictures of an unruly inner city filled with "illegal" immigrants and possible terrorist cells, populations that must be brought out into the open (the political) if only to strip them of life.

Violence also operates across localities. Indeed, it is a transnational process experienced by a new and growing racialized population in barrios throughout the US. In the case of Mexican and Latino immigrants that live in South Central and other barrios, I argue that it is produced through the deterritorializing nature of neoliberal market reforms on sending communities that make it virtually impossible for rural communities, in particular, to make a living, thus they are faced with the violent displacement of their commons to the Global North. Devon Pena (2006), argues that this deterritorializing process creates a sense of "placelessness."

In LA, these new transnational populations are kept in a state of "placelessness" through the constant violence that targets vulnerable racialized immigrant populations. In past decades, various war machines corralled racialized populations, like Latino immigrants, into barrios and ghettos as an expendable and vulnerable working force. In the current modern neo-colonial moment, a type of white fear operates through popular discourses (furthered by a corporate/state media) of a "dangerous" and "illegal" subject that always needs surveillance. This of course takes on a different interpretation in a post 9/11 "war on terror" society. Although the panoptic city, as Pena calls it, de-centers and diffuses policing and surveillance as a task for every "citizen" to pursue, here citizenship and governability both hold a particular racial and class membership that privileges the normative white citizen. This does not displace state violence from a spatial location since the racial and economic regimes of LA still depend on a highly trained police force to protect the rigid borders between racialized poor communities and their white and middle-class counterparts. Instead, policing, or what Gilberto Rosas calls, "policeability" (2006), is not the sole responsibility of the state. The shift towards the neoliberalization of social relations that value individual responsibility over collective action, binds with racial antagonisms over a "foreign" and "dangerous" invasion, to produce a consensus over the use of violence in its many forms against this threat to the social order of LA.

SUMMARY

The South Central Farm and its eventual bulldozing serve as a case study to understand the relationship between state violence, infrastructural warfare, and the production of autonomy in places like South Central Los Angeles. While the construction of the farm, and the farmers themselves serve as an example of the type of responses to the troubling material conditions faced by barrio and ghetto residents in

South Central Los Angeles, it also mirrors the changing face of neoliberal globalization and its impact on communities of color. During my two years living in Los Angeles, the South Central Farm and its struggle against its demise became a key part of my political and personal work. Attending South Central Farm support marches and events, working with South Central Farm supporters and networks via other Chicana/o urban Zapatista spaces, and making personal connections with several Farm leaders and farmers, all became part of my personal connection to this "urban oasis." Politically, I participated in expanding the solidarity network that grew out of the South Central Farm's attempt at buying the land from its original owner. This process of building a strong solidarity network saw the Farm receive support from all parts of the world. Culturally, I connected to the South Central Farm, its farmers, and its supporters as a first-generation Chicano who saw the Farm as a depository for transnational migrant communities, many of them indigenous, who were creating place in a city that values entertainment, consumption, and the rapid movement of capital as its cultural traits. The Farm's ability to produce social relations that did not value consumption or individualism by practicing such social relations as reciprocity and gift giving made it a place for people to learn and practice these alternative value practices on a daily basis. On the other hand, other movements for food sovereignty and cultural survival saw the Farm as a beacon amongst the cruel reality of living in the barrios and ghettos of Los Angeles.

In such "death worlds" where those inhabitants that call these places home are seen as mere disposable commodities and expendable labor, the political and cultural practice of growing one's own food and providing a healthy food source for thousands of people, or food sovereignty, is a response to the neoliberalization of their surroundings. In the case of South Central Los Angeles, its history of being highly policed and denied the same access to resources as other more affluent neighborhoods in Southern

California, the struggle to save the Farm has made it one of the most important battles for social and environmental justice in the region in recent memory.

I have privileged violence in order to make a particular point about what communities of color in places like South Central Los Angeles face and how they have created autonomous alternatives to these "death worlds" even after the destructive war machines have made away with their physical manifestations. Both must be discussed in order to collectively produce effective forms of resistance and alternatives and to further autonomy as a political and cultural project. Having witnessed the destruction of the Farm firsthand and emotionally feeling helpless to the terror caused by a small bulldozer and dozens of police officers makes me a witness to the type of infrastructural warfare discussed by Achille Mbembe when he talks about a "necropolitics" that is lived by racialized populations throughout the world. This death politics, that is discussed by Mbembe, privileges experience as a site of creating a particular type of subjectivity, that is devalued of humanity but that politically holds the transformative possibility of creating beauty amongst the grey of concrete that such places like South Central Los Angeles is known for having.

The case of the South Central Farm offers such a reconceptualization of Mbembe's "necropolitics" by thinking of these autonomous projects as "life-worlds" that are not only physical and spatial but also produced in our day to day social relations. Such "war machines" that are seeking to displace and destroy our commons become less effective as they tend to underestimate the multiple ways we conceive of these "life worlds" as transformative sites of producing radical political subjectivities.

CHAPTER 7

La Otra en el Otro Lado

Open Stage at the October 19, 2006 Tijuana Other Campaign Meetings

> Cut on the other side, a mirror stops being a mirror and becomes a crystal. And the mirrors are for seeing on this side and the crystals are for seeing on the other side.
>
> Mirrors are for cutting.
> Crystals are for shattering...and crossing to the other side... (Sub Comandante Marcos, Durito IV, June 1995)
>
> *El otro Mexico que aca hemos construido*
> *El espacio es lo que ha sido*
> *Territorio nacional.*
> *Este es el esfuerzo de todos nuestros hermanos*
> *Y latinoamericanos que han sabido*
> *Progressar.*
> (Los Tigres del Norte quoted from the poem El Otro Mexico in Borderlands/La Frontera by Gloria Anzaldua)

Chapter 7 ends this dissertation by crossing the political and cultural geographical borders of Chicana/o urban Zapatismo in Los Angeles, California, heading southward

towards the Mexico/US border. Up to now, I have identified Chicana/o urban Zapatismo's concern with furthering a cultural politics based the concepts of "autonomy" and "autonomous organizing." Its successes, failures, and potential for contesting the social, political, and economic regimes of the region have been the focus of inquiry in prior chapters. This final chapter makes one final intervention on the production of Chicana/o urban Zapatista cultural politics by theorizing the circulation of struggles that emerge between Chicana/o urban Zapatistas in Los Angeles and other ethnic Mexican Zapatistas along the Mexico/US border. It discusses the active participation of Chicana/o and Mexicana/o activists, community organizers, artists, and musicians in the latest Zapatista initiative, the Mexican Other Campaign, from June 2005 through December 2006. Moreover, it focuses primarily on the interpersonal and interdependent relationship between Los Angeles-based Chicana/o participants in the Other Campaign and their conceptual counterparts, ethnic Mexicans working on the Other Campaign in Baja California, Mexico. Through an ethnographic interrogation of the popular border term, "*el otro lado*" (the other side),[40] this chapter makes an intervention on a much longer and contentious historical discussion around identity formation within borderlands anthropology and Chicana/o Studies. It does so through the recollections, observations, and participation of Chicana/o, Mexicana/o, and Latina/o activists and organizers,

[40] The term, "*el otro lado*," has been historically associated with the physical separation of two racial/ethnic/national communities by the creation of the 1950-mile long US///Mexico border. It is used primarily by those on the Mexican side of the border to refer to those that inhabit the United States side of the geopolitical border. But it is also used by many US ethnic Mexicans to mark differences in terms of race, class, language, and citizenship, between themselves and their counterparts on the Mexican side of the border. Indeed, its origins stem from the consequential social relations created after the imperial conquest of the Southwestern United States by the United States in 1848 and the culture of US imperialism associated with the formation of the contemporary Mexico/US border (Saldivar). Since then, Chicanos, Mexican Americans, and Mexicanos living *en este lado* (on the US side) have had a long and tenuous relationship with their severed but equally intimate neighbors to the south[40]. Thus, the use of the term "*el otro lado*" has evolved over the last two centuries to identify the racial, ethnic, economic, and cultural differences between populations of people that live along the only border that separates a "first world" country with a "third world" country.

including my own, working politically to expand and define the Mexican Other Campaign in Los Angeles, California and along the Mexico/US border. I argue in this final chapter of the dissertation that by investigating the circulation of struggle between the numerous narratives of Chicana/o urban Zapatistas working within the Other Campaign as border crossers and those from Baja California, through the lens of Chicana radical feminist, Gloria Anzaldua's concept of *autohistoriateoria*, and the Zapatista concept of "encuentro," one may be able to articulate the radical (re)ordering of such contested social spaces as the Mexico/US border and in effect map the reshaping of historically situated racialized and neo-colonial social relations between Chicanos, Mexicans in the United States, and Mexicans in Mexico.

UNDERSTANDING "EL OTRO LADO": CHICANAS/OS AND THE MEXICAN IMAGINARY

It is a muggy and hot mid-September 2005 afternoon in the Zapatista community of Francisco Gomez in Chiapas. There are a series of make-shift tables where several people are setting up the registration for the day's meetings with the CCRI-CG (*Comite Clandestino Revolucionario Indigena-Comandancia General*), the representative body of the EZLN, or by its Spanish name, the *Ejército Zapatista Liberación Nacional*. The past few days have been much of the same. Each day, different sectors of Mexican civil society, are invited to share brief words about themselves and what they hope to struggle for. As Luis Hernandez Navarro writes, it is the preparatory meetings of what is known as *La Otra Campaña Mexicana* and "the diversity of their ranks was surprising: unionists, indigenous organizers, intellectuals, cultural workers, artists, religious people, neighborhood activists, feminists, gays, lesbians, human rights advocates, environmentalists, and students." (Hernandez Navarro, 2006) Mariana Mora, a

participant in the meetings and activist-scholar writing on the Zapatistas writes a similar description:

> The more than 2,000 participants represented diverse political actors, some whose political formation began with post-1994 Zapatismo, others who were participating for the first time in an event convened by the rebel army, and still others whose experiences in struggles dated back to the 1970s. Those present included representatives of urban youth forums, feminist collectives, various trade unions, nongovernmental organizations, and indigenous organizations from all regions of the republic. (Mora, 2007)

The similarity in recollections by Hernandez Navarro and Mora reflect the large diverse gatherings or *encuentros* that the Zapatistas are historically known to facilitate.[41] In this case, the different sectors of Mexican society invited are a composite diorama of the Left in Mexico.

On this particular September morning, Olmeca, a Chicano rap artist from East Los Angeles, and Mixpe, a Chicana writer and school teacher from Southeast Los Angeles, co-coordinators for the Estación Libre transnational "US people of color" collective and part of a small contingent of Los Angeles-based groups that made the long trip south to Chiapas, walk up to the registration table and face the Mexican mestizo[42] volunteers at the table. Before giving them their credentials for the meetings, the Mexican volunteers ask them, "*de que region*?" (from what region?). They reply rather quickly, "*de Los Angeles, California*." (from Los angeles California) The volunteers without thinking twice reply, "*oh son del intergalactico*." (you are from the intergalactic). The *intergalactico* is the international aspect of the Other Campaign and the convergence of grassroots groups that are outside of Mexico and thus not part of the national campaign of

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[41] These encuentros include the 1994, the 1995, the 1996 Intercontinental Encounter For Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, and various other encuentros that invite Mexican and International civil society to participate.

[42] I make this distinction of Mexican mestizos because Francisco Gomez is a predominantly Mayan Indian community.

La Otra Campaña Mexicana. Olmeca and Mixpe look at each other and clarify that they are of course not there for the intergalactic but to speak on behalf of several collectives and organizations in Los Angeles, California. "*No! Somos chicanos de Los angeles*." Reiterating their place in the series of talks, Olmeca and Mixpe do not move from in front of the line although there are several dozen people waiting to receive their badges. Olmeca and Mixpe had faced similar reactions throughout the early organizing of the meetings in San Cristobal de las Casas and were starting to get extremely annoyed at the constant confusion on the part of the Mexican organizers of the event. As Mixpe would later put it, "it was bad enough that they had us scheduled to talk on the last day and under the 'reunion with the others.'"

The mestizo volunteers at the registration table leave for several minutes, presumably to ask someone who might know what to do in this interplay of identity politics between Chicanos from the US and Mexicanos in Mexico. After several moments, someone comes to the table and writes down their names on the series of participants for the afternoon meeting. One of the organizers speaks, "*Bueno pues, hacemos una nueva lista para los del otro lado dentro de la discussion de diferencias*" (we will make a separate list for those on the other side within the discussion on differences) Olmeca and Mixpe leave the registration table with a sour taste in their mouth, not sure of their future participation in the preparatory talks and more importantly, not sure of the Chicana/o and US Mexican participation in the forming Mexican Other Campaign.

"EL OTRO LADO"/THE OTHER SIDE

Such trans-border organizing attempts reflect historically situated differences imposed by the formation of the 1950-mile long Mexico/US border. Contemporary

narratives of the US/Mexico border are arranged to demonstrate the continued appearance of coloniality, state violence, and global capitalism along this artificial border. (Velez-Ibanez, 1995; Saldivar, 1999; Saldivar 1997; Pena 1998; Martinez, 1988; Martinez, 1994; Alvarez, 1995)These include the constant militarization and violence on both sides of the border, (Rosas, 2006; Andreas, 2000) the effects of economic globalization on the lives of local and global communities, (Rodriguez, 1997; Pena, 1998; Kearney, 1995; Iglesias Prieto, 1997) and the undocumented entry of migrants in an age of Terror. (DeGenova; Rodriguez 1997; Neving, 2002; Ngai, 2004) In this case, the common use of the term "*el otro lado*" (the other side) by border crossers and dwellers has been used since the creation of the US/Mexico border, to describe the unequal power relations between the United States and Mexico. Invoked primarily by Mexicans living in Mexico to refer to the United States side of the border, el otro lado's multiple meanings intersects with the many histories of racism, war, genocide, economic exploitation, and forced migration of subaltern populations on both sides of the border; creating what Gloria Anzaldua refers to as "una herida abierta" (an open wound). In her opening to Borderlands/La Frontera, she poetically states the meaning of this open wound:

> The U.S.-Mexican border es una herida abierta where the Third World grates the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal." (Anzaldua, 1986: 25)

These narratives, shaped by the term "*el otro lado*" or by this "open wound", are detrimental towards understanding the conceptual differences between racialized ethnic Mexicans in the United States and those in Mexico.

For the "Other Campaign", the use of the term "*el otro lado*" determined early relationships and engagements between Chicano and Mexicano adherents to the Other Campaign. In most accounts and communiqués written by the Zapatistas of the Other Campaign, a visible void existed when it came to the experiences and lives of Chicanos and Mexicanos living in the United States and along the US/Mexico border. These voids included a clear analysis of the reasons why Mexicans continued to migrate north to the United States. Early visits by the "Other Campaign" caravan of Southern Mexican states awoke the Other Campaign to the painful reality that there existed nowhere in Mexico a place that wasn't drastically affected by migration. If the de-territorialization of millions of Mexicans seemed foreign to the "Other Campaign", what voids existed to the lives of Chicanos in the United States?

LA OTRA EN EL OTRO LADO

Olmeca and Mixpe's experiences in Chiapas did not deter Chicanos and other ethnic Mexican groups living in the United States from participating in the Mexican Other Campaign. By the end of 2005, hundreds of people in the United States had adhered to the latest Zapatista declaration, the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle, (excerpt of the declaration, Appendix III) and dozens of La Otra groups emerged throughout the United States. From New York to Chicago to El Paso to the Bay Area, La Otra groups organized themselves in their own distinct ways and with their own distinct manner of organizing. In New York, a global city with a growing Mexican population and a history of Zapatista solidarity work, Mexican immigrants working on anti-

gentrification campaigns adopted the tenets of La Otra in their organizing to broaden their struggle for fair housing in East Harlem. In El Paso, Texas, La Otra groups dealt with issues concerning border militarization, drug trafficking, and the gendered violence associated with the murders of Juarez women. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the Zapa-Califas network had provided the resources and momentum for La Otra groups to network between those that were more solidarity based and those that were focused on local issues concerning the ethnic Mexican population of the Bay Area.[43] And in Los Angeles, the Autonomous Peoples Collective (APC) and *La Otra en el Otro Lado*, (LOOL) emerge as the two distinctly different groups that represented the Other Campaign.

La Otra Transfronteriza

The initial organizing with groups across the border in Baja California is a result of the numerous social networks formed between Zapatista solidarity groups in Southern California, the Baja California chapters of the Frente Zapatista Liberación Nacional (FZLN), and various cross-border grassroots organizations. Many collectives on the Mexican side of the border were ex-Frente Zapatista groups turned La Otra groups. The Frente had a long history since 1996 of working with groups "en el otro lado", specifically with Zapatista solidarity groups and immigrant rights organizations in San Diego and along the border. The convergence of other leftist organizations also included anarco-punk groups, Marxist-Leninist groups like the FPR, the communist party, feminist organizations, the environmental justice movement, the "green" movement, to some extent indigenous communities, maquiladora workers, local university students, and a

[43] The case of the Bay Area La Otra groups is an interesting one. Not only did it emerge more as a network of many groups but it also had a much more racially and ethnically diverse membership than other La otra groups in California. This, in my opinion, has to do with the diverse political organizing character of Bay Area grassroots organizing.

whole range of other individuals and collectives that found a niche within the broad umbrella convoked by La Otra Campaña. In Southern California, the groups included Zapatista-inspired Chicana/o autonomous collectives from Los Angeles, progressive and alternative media collectives, day laborer collectives, immigrant rights organizations, university student groups, and anarchist groups.

Once the Other campaign "first stage" calendar of caravan stops came out in a communiqué in December 2005, with the dates for the preliminary border meetings, organizing on both side of the border started to form in the shape of logistical meetings. Since January 2006 APC had agreed to send monthly representatives to meet as La Otra Transfronteriza. Many of the autonomous groups that made up APC (Casa Del Pueblo, Eastside Cafe Echospace, Copwatch LA, Estación Libre, South Central Farm support Committee, Centro Cultural de Mexico, and others) were working on local projects concurrently with the difficult task of self-sustaining their spaces with very little resources. Citywide, APC was very much involved in the South Central Farm struggle in South Central Los Angeles. APC had offered various workshops from time to time and had many of their meetings at the "Farm", including a statewide Zapatista group encuentro. Various APC members were even arrested after blocking Alameda avenue and 41st. during the Sheriff's takeover of the farm in May 2006.

La Transfronteriza was an essential part of every APC meeting and an important part of our work as adherents to the Other Campaign. This process of working locally and transnationally was and continues to be a difficult task for many groups in Los Angeles including APC. Our own debates over where our attention should lie would lead to similar debates and arguments over political tactics and organizing effectiveness. Since we are talking about primarily working class or working class background Chicanas/os from Los Angeles, with many having a college education or less, the need to

work locally was a fundamental trait of furthering autonomy and self-determination throughout the greater Los Angeles area.

APC had also focused much attention on the other La Otra groups in Los Angeles for which they felt a serious ideological and political disconnect with. Mainly with La Otra del Otro Lado, APC battled over participation within La Otra, and often times, this would carry over to *La Otra Transfronteriza* meetings. For APC, the process of convoking a pluri-ethnic and pluri-nationality space for people to dialogue about the Sixth Declaration and *La Otra Campaña* was an important goal. Those in APC did not feel that other groups in Los Angeles were much concerned with this style of organizing and instead they sought to create a space for their participation as Mexicans, and only Mexicans, within "*Mexico Ocupado*." I remember various ethnographic notes and summaries where I would write down comments made at Transfronteriza meetings where compañeras/os from APC would try to discuss the role of Chicanos within La Otra, only to be handed trivialized and paternalistic slaps on the hand by those in Baja and from other US Mexican *La Otra* groups that saw Chicano participation as a result of "Mexican ancestry."

One aspect of this relationship that in working with groups in Baja I noticed was the concept of "work". Many Mexican activists interpreted "work" differently than Chicanos from the US. To them, "work" meant this connection to direct action and going out to the community or in this case, the masses and organizing. Chicanos, on the other hand, saw "work" as a series of processes that would eventually lead to direct action but that also acquired a different sense of work that would lead to new forms of social interaction that questioned and broke down racist, classist, nationalist, sexist, and homophobic tendencies within political organizing.

At first, the meetings in Tijuana were scheduled for June and it was to be one entire day, split between *La Otra Tijuana* and *La Otra en el Otro Lado*. For months prior in preparation of the June date, *La Otra Transfronteriza* meetings were filled with debates and stern positions on the use of time for the Tijuana date. Many in Tijuana felt that the time should be used for the maquiladora workers to share their word with the caravan. Others from the United States were not opposed to the idea of maquila workers having a significant amount of time to share their experiences but it was clear that many groups from "el otro lado" felt Tijuana was trying to short change the Chicano participation within the June date. It was clearly demarcated by the Mexicanos in the early transfronteriza meetings that "los del otro lado" were the invited group and not seen on equal organizing footing as other Baja groups. This sentiment was not shared by all La Otra groups in California. Those groups that had a larger Mexican base in the United States were more inclined to give up necessary time during the meetings. This perspective was not necessarily forged out of building a solidarity with Mexican La Otra groups but instead to make sure that these groups would gain greater concessions within the organizing, hopefully leading to a greater participation in the meetings. The odd persons out in this scenario were primarily Chicana/o La Otra groups that sought equal footing in an otherwise awkward set-up.

In hindsight, these initial debates are important because they reflect the constant struggles and negotiations that many of the US based La Otra groups underwent as part of La Transfronteriza and this experience of "struggling and negotiating" would pay off later as they constructed a more assembly type of structure in the monthly meetings. More importantly, they are telling of the attitudes and tendencies associated on both sides of the border to questions over "belonging" and who fits under the guise of a national campaign like La Otra Campaña. Even Marcos in many of his early communiqués on la

Otra Campaña forgets to mention the paradoxical questions that are brought up early in the chapter's introduction over Chicanos participation in an otherwise Mexican national movement. These enclosed spaces where Chicanas and Chicanos were excluded from participating because they were US born has a much larger historical trajectory for which this chapter cannot cover in such a short time. Instead, they are brought up to map the power and social relations that were a part of the initial organizing within La Otra Transfronteriza.

THE OTHER CAMPAIGN MEETINGS WITH THE OTHER SIDE AND THE BORDER

The major task of La Otra Transfronteriza was the planning for the arrival of the Zapatista led Sixth Commission Caravan to Baja California. A strong Chicana/o presence at preliminary meetings in Chiapas and Mexico City had guaranteed the participation of Other Campaign groups from the United States. In turn, the initial stage of the Other Campaign planned on sending its representative, Delegado Zero, also commonly known as Sup-comandante Marcos, to tour every state in Mexico, from Chiapas to the northern states. His task was to meet with Other Campaign groups throughout Mexico and listen to their stories, concerns, and hopes for the Other Campaign.

The tragic events at San Salvador Atenco, in early May 2006 that saw over a thousand armed soldiers and police officers enter the small ejido town of San Salvador Atenco and clash with the *Frente de Pueblos en Defensa de la Tierra*, an adherent to the Other Campaign, stalemated the caravan in Mexico City for most of the summer. State repression of Other Campaign groups increased after the May Atenco rebellion, and other struggles throughout Mexico, like the parallel teachers strike in Oaxaca, and the protests against the Mexican presidential elections of early July. After much deliberation and

coordination of solidarity efforts for those arrested in Atenco, the caravan resumed in the fall with Baja California as a site marked for early October.

Meeting with Triqui Representatives in San Quintin, Baja California

By October 2006, the caravan arrived to Baja California via ferry from the port of Mazatlan. From the bottom of the Baja peninsula, the caravan traveled north through several indigenous communities inhabited by Oaxacan indigenous migrants. In the town of San Quintin, Delegado Zero listened to the testimonies of Triqui indigenous groups describe the difficult working conditions faced by Triqui migrants in Baja. They also spoke to the Delegado about the lack of rights they had as an indigenous group due to their migrant status in Baja California. Indigenous rights and recognition were not being respected in the region for the Triqui and other Oaxaqueño indigenous communities because they had left their "traditional" lands in Oaxaca. The state of Baja California instead saw them as migrant workers who worked the agricultural fields of the region. In numerous stops along the way north towards Tijuana, the Delegado Zero overheard

indigenous communities describe the same process of erasure by the state on indigenous peoples. The Kumiai and Cucapa, traditional indigenous groups of the region, also spoke about the state not recognizing their communities as indigenous due to their failure to meet the requirements of what an indigenous group supposedly looked like. Failure for many of these indigenous groups to speak their traditional language was seen as an indicator that they did not exist and not as a sign of years of forced assimilation on the indigenous communities of the region. In each case, Delegado Zero heard and wrote down notes of each testimony, summarizing afterwards their presentations and tying them eloquently to others struggles he had listened to throughout the country.

The Other Campaign Presentations at the Ensenada Meetings

As the caravan traveled closer to the urban areas of Ensenada and Tijuana, and left behind the desolate and arid communities of the south, the presentations focused

more on the exploitation of natural resources and the wrongdoings of numerous multi-national corporations from the United States and Europe. Environmental justice activists from Ensenada spoke about how the extraction of natural resources by large multi-national corporations, were disrupting the flora and fauna of the Baja California desert. Infrastructure plans to build water dams for energy, gas and oil speculation, and the growing tourist industries, displaced countless number of communities near Ensenada. This forced thousands to move to Tijuana or attempt to make the dangerous journey north to the United States.

For most of the week touring the Baja California region, I had worked as the co-coordinator of security for Sub-comandante Marcos and the rest of the Caravan. I was able to participate first hand in the events that transpired on these two days and notice the collaborative work of both groups from the US and Mexico. Accompanied by three other compañeros that were a part of the Autonomous Peoples Collective, Olmeca, Joel, and Gerardo, we helped the caravan with logistics and manual labor at every stop ending with their arrival to the border city of Tijuana.

October 18th, 2007 9 am

We arrived to Tijuana without showering and with limited sleep. We hadn't slept very well the last two days inside the cramped mini-van. Joel had taken most of the driving responsibilities since San Quintin and Olmeca had been in charge of keeping close communication with the Sup and his aides. I was now the de-facto *encargado* of security for the caravan and this responsibility still had not hit me yet. I thought, "What if something happened to the sup and the caravan and under my watch? I would be the most hated Chicano in the entire world. This was, by the way, where twelve years prior, PRI candidate Colosio had been assassinated." The night prior in Ensenada we experienced our first encounter with the series of unmarked cars and SUV's that left us

panicked and unsure if we could continue with this cargo that many of the compas from Baja had asked us to take on. We walkie-talkie'd the sup's black minivan if he knew anything of the unmarked cars. He jokingly, replied, "no's esta siguiendo todos, el FBI, CIA, PFP, INTERPOL, y hasta el KGB y los Rusos." Although his words didn't relieve much of our anxiety, it definitely put a different mood on an otherwise tense situation. The caravan had grown tremendously since the first stop in San Quintin. The beautiful desert landscapes of the southern part of the state were replaced by the English billboards for consumer goods from the United States and land speculation along the Pacific Ocean. Small fishing communities that used to run down the coast heading to Tijuana were now filled with hotels and bars, in anticipation of the droves of “gringos” that came during the weekend and spend their US dollars on alcohol and drugs. Just on the outskirts of these hotel zones, colonies of unincorporated homes, some made from aluminum sheeting, sprawled the hills leading to Tijuana.

TIJUANA MEETINGS WITH DELEGADO ZERO

Delegado Zero visits the border fence between Mexico and the US

After making a brief stop along the border fence that leads into the Pacific Ocean for Delegado Zero to mimic urinating on the fence, we drove into downtown Tijuana and arrived at the doors of an old abandoned movie theatre turned open-air amphitheatre. The Multikulti, as it was called, was owned by an ex-member of the Tijuana based Zapatista inspired rock group, Tijuana No. He purchased the old movie theater years back in order to put on punk and rock shows for people in Tijuana. During these two days, the Other Campaign caravan made the theater a meeting place for planned gatherings between Tijuana Other Campaign groups and those from the "other side." The first day in Tijuana was dedicated to "Other Campaign" groups from the Tijuana border region. Women garment and electrical workers from nearby maquiladora factories began the talks with dozens of testimonies describing their struggle for a social wage and better working conditions in the maquiladora. Many of the women also described the sexual

harassment constantly faced inside and outside of the factory and the difficulties their organizing

Several Tijuana youth groups followed the maquiladora workers testimonies. They described the increase in criminalization of Tijuana youth and the lack of opportunities for youth in Tijuana to find jobs and an education. Environmental justice organizations in Tijuana also made presentations on the lack of electricity, potable water, proper sewage lines, and transportation lines in their communities. Several women from the community of Maclovio Rojas, a colony of Tijuana that recently declared itself an autonomous colony, spoke about their turbulent history organizing in the wake of extreme police repression in Tijuana.

Banner in Preparation for the October 19, 2006 Meetings

The next day was dedicated to “Other Campaign” groups from the United States. Leading up to the October 19th event, many within *La Transfronteriza* questioned whether the Chicano participation would be significant or whether they would travel to Tijuana to participate. When I arrived on that morning to the front of the amphitheatre, I saw countless numbers of people waiting to register outside. The outside banners had such slogans as, "La Otra Campaña" and "Presos, Politicos, Libertad”. Adherents, from as far north as Vancouver, Canada, and as local as San Isidro, on the other side of the border, arrived to the October 19th event and shared their experiences with the growing audience. Nearly 500 people from the United States filled the old amphitheatre throughout the day, taking turns speaking on issues of racism, war, education, women’s rights, culture and art, alternative media, education, and immigration. Each participant had a distinct style, memory, and word to share. Many spoke only in English. Others spoke in Chicano Spanish, or *calo*.

First person to present at the October 19, 2006 meetings with "el otro lado"

The first person to stand up on stage and begin the encuentro was the father of Alicia, a member of *La Otra en el Otro Lado*, one of the two "Other Campaign" groups in Los Angeles. He emotionally began to speak about his experiences crossing the US///Mexico border. Teary-eyed, he described the many times he was deported attempting to cross the border, eloquently stating, "los primeros lugares que conoci en llegar fue sus carceles." (The first places I saw in coming to the US were its jails.) Others after him continued to speak about crossing the US/Mexico border and having to leave their families behind. Some of the speakers spoke about the organizing efforts of day laborers in Southern California and about the campaigns to end ICE raids in their communities.

Crowd in attendance at Tijuana Meetings listening to the presentations

Dozens of individuals and collectives made presentations after the initial theme of immigration describing the current situation in their communities. After a short break, Marcos presented as well the words of several undocumented youth and elders in the United States who could not cross to Tijuana for fear of not being able to get back to San Diego. Instead, they shared their words with the Delegado Zero over webcam.

One particular presentation used guerrilla theatre to make a point about recent anti-immigration hysteria. Marisol, a member of the Chicana/o teatro and comedy troop, Las Ramonas and a founding member of the women's autonomous performance group, In Lak Ech in Los Angeles, California, performed a short one-woman skit in front of the hundreds in attendance, mimicking the recent nativist attacks on Mexicans in the US by the Minuteman militia, a right-wing paramilitary group that has gained national attention for its armed anti-immigrant operations along the US///Mexico border. She dressed up in a blond wig with a United States jacket and flag on her hat. Interestingly enough, after

her performance piece, Marisol took off her hat and wig and introduced herself to the crowd in Spanish. Here, she began to explain in a broken Spanish widely known by Chicanos as "spanglish", the importance of the arts and culture as a way to express her experience, historia, and identity. Marisol, like many Chicanas from Los Angeles and other parts of California, apologized for her broken Spanish and identified it as a part of her "pocha" identity. In this case, the most commonly referred phrase in Tijuana was, "disculpe mi español". Marisol ended her presentation thanking the Zapatistas and el Delegado Zero for inspiring Chicanos in Los Angeles to be able to continue struggling against injustices and for helping many in attendance to find a voice through the arts.

Reflecting on the events of October 19, 2006, Cal State Northridge graduate student kualyque writes:

> Some bring gifts for Sub. Marcos. Some perform poetry, teatro, music. All speak from their hearts, their experiences, their realities, their hopes and dreams, their rage, their resistant, insistent love. They describe the experiences of neocapitalist, neoliberal oppression in their own communities, the attack on -- and struggle to maintain --family ties, the migration and labor exploitation, the patriarchal domination, the heterosexism and homophobia they encounter daily, the violence against youth and women, the racist, genocidal practices of the prison-school-military-industrial complex; and they talk about the work they are doing in their communities to maintain dignity, to remain connected, to fight back, todos dando sus testimonios, everyone sharing and learning from one another. Often, they, and the audience, are brought to tears. Luis and I, both sons of immigrant parents, are especially moved by the testimony of one elder ex-bracero, and his insistence that we maintain connection with family across the border, across the difficulties of migrant life and disrupted relationship, especially between parents and children; and we are also very moved and impressed by our own young Mechista Marcos' powerful speech about his LGBT group (much later, still overcome with emotion, Luis can't help but give Marcos a huge hug and congratulations on his speech, making Marcos blush very cutely). After many speakers are done giving their palabra, Sub. Marcos stands and greets them, shakes hands, exchanges hugs. Repeatedly, Chicanas and Chicanos apologize for their pocho Spanish, but they try anyway, and later, Delegado 0 will address this in his own concluding remarks—how we speak with whatever languages we have, however we can, regardless of the discriminatory and divisive educations that a racist society has

> imposed on us. He talks about how we construct new geographies with the languages we use, how we shape new communities of resistance by insisting on communication from the heart, sale como sale, English, Español, Espanglish, lo que séa. At several points, Sub. Marcos even throws in a few pochismos of his own. [44]

As I walked around the space, many of the compañeras and compañeros from Baja California were very impressed by the words spoken by everyone. The sharing of ideas and struggles by everyone in attendance contextualized the hesitancies that many in Baja had to the participation of Chicanos within meetings. Others later mentioned that our participation as a support team during the caravan contributed to the breaking down of misconceptions of US organizers, as not doing everyday "dirty" work and instead being focused solely on dialogic expressions of political process. Many of the La Otra groups from Baja California heard testimonies of what people in the United States face and reformulated their understanding of what it might mean to live in the United States.

This process also affected Chicanas/os and other groups from the United States. Participants who traveled across the border heard testimonies from people in Baja California about the types of struggles they face on a daily basis. Hearing testimonies about youth drug use and criminalization in Tijuana, the struggle for better wages by women garment workers in maquiladoras, or the creation of autonomous colonias in the outskirts of Tijuana provided an important discursive bridge for groups from both sides of the border to dialogue and discuss cross-border strategies to further their struggles.

ZAPATISMO, BORDER THEORY, AND AUTOHISTORIATEORIA

I attribute the shift in attitudes between groups in *La Otra Transfronteriza* to the embracing and prior knowledge of fundamental Zapatista political practices that have inspired work in the United States and Mexico since 1994. For many of the individuals

[44] See http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/auto/mictlan_otro.html; "La otra Campaña/el otro lado: magic, migrations, machetes" by kualyque. The blog is called "The Sickly Season: notes from mictlan."

and collectives that adhered to the Zapatista-initiated “Mexican Other Campaign”, it was Zapatismo’s track record to converge distinctly different groups together in solidarity that attracted them to its ranks. Of Zapatismo’s many proposals for bringing groups together, it is the concept of “encuentro” that reflects their broad global appeal. Within the Zapatista concept of “encuentro” is the necessity to meet, discuss, share, and propose ideas, visions, and dreams of what world we wish to create. It is a response to the Zapatista motto of “another world is possible.” This aspect of Zapatismo asks, if another world is possible then how do we begin to form this world, knowing what we are up against and knowing that we are all different and have different ways of working towards that world? What the Zapatistas propose is a politics that is formed from the convergence of experiences and approaches that each one brings to the table. In their early peace negotiations after the uprising, the Zapatistas made a series of political calls and consultations with Mexican civil society over the course of the Zapatista indigenous movement. Inviting Mexican civil society to the jungles of Chiapas, the Zapatistas have kept the local emphasis of their struggle while at the same time bridging their experiences with those of people in other rural areas or in the city. This has helped the Zapatistas from being pigeon-holed into an “indigenous movement” and not a movement that seeks “democracy, freedom, and justice” for all Mexicans. Mexican civil society responded to these invitations by accepting the Zapatista invitation and meeting with the indigenous communities first hand. From that point on, the Zapatistas have created numerous spaces and invited people from all over the world to meet with them and discuss what world they wish to create together. This strategy, the meetings with different groups from different places and with different experiences offers what Manuel Callahan suggests is the power of a “politics of space”, a “crucial bridge between different worlds and that bridge is manifest in a new "international"-not an international based on rigid party doctrines or the

dogmas of competing organizations, but an "International of Hope," a web constituted by numerous autonomies, without a center or hierarchy, within which various coalitions of discontents can express themselves, in order to dismantle the forces and regimes oppressing all of them." (Callahan, 2004) In this case, the Zapatistas have offered their working model of "encuentro" as one of many communicative models that attempts at bridging difference through dialogue and testimony.

Chicana Feminist Border Theory

The Zapatista model of "encuentro" is but one self-reflexive model attempting to bridge the differences created from the continued appearance of coloniality and global capitalism. Chicana feminist border theory, especially that of the late Chicana radical theorist, Gloria Anzaldua, also attempts to bridge differences through the recuperation and remembering of experiences in the wake of the fragmentation and cultural amnesia created by the reinforcement of the US/Mexico borderlands. I contend that border theory deriving from situated experiences of people living along and across borders, in this case the US/Mexico border, also offer more than valuable knowledge and insight into questions of power and subject formation. Moreover, Chicana border theory also produces a radical praxis amongst border dwellers towards disrupting the imperial and racial designs of coloniality along the US/Mexico border. Through my engagement with Chicana feminist theories --that analyze how political struggle and daily life experiences shape identity formation, in ways that are not uniform or totalizing, but rather multilayered, nonlinear and historically situated— I contend that border theory can disrupt imperial, colonial, patriarchal, and heteronormative power relations of el otro lado with *este lado* through a process Gloria Anzaldua referred to as *autohistoriateoria*. The power in *autohistoriateoria*, or one's personal and collective history that theorizes, is its

ability to invoke, enter in dialogue, and merge different herstories and histories onto the body: those of Queer Chicanas, Mexican immigrants, of people of color and whites, of other groups who see themselves as different. Once one encounters these different *autohistorias* and is in dialogue with them, they are transformed by the experience. This process is not always a safe journey because one must trust and believe that this transition is necessary in order to reach what Anzaldua referred to as *conocimiento*, a constantly changing level of political, cultural, and spiritual consciousness that attempts to defy the hegemonic binaries of traditional identity politics and power relations.

Through the lens of Anzaldua's *autohistoriateoria* and the Zapatista politics of encuentro, such terms as *El otro lado*" or the "other side," becomes a way to understand and interpret racial, ethnic, economic, national, gendered differences and enclosures in the context of living or crossing towards either side of the border. It reflects not only the national boundaries of two countries but it invokes the deep seeded continuity of racial/ethnic, gendered, and imperial imaginaries of those that live along the 1950-mile border and those that attempt to cross its "treacherous geographies" (Rosas, 2006).

What I gather from the Zapatistas use of the "encuentro" and Anzaldua's concept of an "*autohistoriateoria*" is the ways in which participants in "encuentros" who are sharing their many "*autohistoriateorias*" are reshaping and reassembling discourses of power to challenge them and create new political subjectivities. Indeed, the Zapatistas own *autohistoriateoria* during their *encuentros* produces a political language, an insurgent language that also posits as a political project: the tearing down of walls and borders that continue reproducing themselves in the daily lives of people living on both sides of the US/Mexico border. In the case of the participation of Chicanos in the Other Campaign, the internalized power relationship between Chicanos from the United States and Mexicans in Mexico is put under question. I argue that the *autohistorias* shared

during the October encuentros in Baja disrupts, if momentarily, the coloniality of power along the US/Mexico border that positions a diverse population of peoples as either from one side or another and within the complex racialized gendered hierarchies of the US/Mexico borderlands. Although the *autohistorias* did not represent the voices of everyone in the United States, they did not intend to, in fact, the power of an *autohistoriateoria* is its reference to others not present in order to create thresholds for future engagements/encuentros with these silent voices. The political project here is how to sustain such a braided politics that incorporates the use of *autohistoriateoria* and creates these spaces of convergence within our daily lives?

BORDER CROSSINGS

Delegado Zero summarizing the day's events to the crowd at the Multikulti

The October 18th and 19th Tijuana meetings ended with a profound presentation by Delegado Zero. Recounting the events of the past two days, Marcos begins summarizing the narratives of people living in the United States almost verbatim. With only a small notebook full of notes, he wove each *autohistoria* together in an impressive tapestry of resistance faced by border dwellers on both sides of the border. More than half way through his speech to the crowd, Delegado Zero tells the story of Elias Contreras, a frequently invoked character in his most recent detective stories and communiqués and a representative of the Zapatista Commission of Investigations. Marcos begins:

> Elías Contreras es el nombre de un compañero indígena zapatista que hace tiempo mandamos nosotros como Comisión de Investigación a afuera, decimos nosotros, o a abajo, para referirnos a que hay que salir de las montañas, para que fuera haciendo como el diagnóstico, o el estudio, que nos iba a permitir luego hacer la Sexta Declaración de la Selva Lacandona y convocar a la Otra Campaña. Las preguntas que tenía que resolver Elías Contreras no sólo tenían que ver con la clase política. Con los partidos políticos que sabíamos que iban a presentarse, en el periodo electoral, como los respectivos salvadores de lo que estaba pasando en nuestro país. Cuando regresó Elías Contreras a las montañas, y a mí me tocó recibir su informe, me di cuenta que había cruzado al otro lado. Yo estaba tan sorprendido de que hubiera cruzado, y además hubiera cruzado de regreso y no lo hubieran detenido, que no alcancé a regañarlo porque no tenía orden para eso. Alcancé a preguntarle cómo le había hecho. Dice él que hay una semejanza muy grande —bueno el explicó en lengua tzeltal, pero yo lo estoy tratando de traducir— entre lo que ustedes llaman los pochos o los chicanos y los indígenas a la hora de hablar el español, o sea que lo hablamos chueco. Entonces, cuando cruzó la frontera de México con Estados Unidos, lo para la migra —ya ven que ponen de migra a unos que son latinos, como para que entre raza mismo se empiece a marcar la división, o sea no era un güero— decía Elías Contreras: "era uno así como nosotros, como cualquier ciudadano. Y entonces me preguntó algo en inglés, pero yo no le entendí, y entonces yo empecé a decir: grande camión, yo allá. Y entonces el entendió que era pocho y me dejó pasar". Se sube al camión y va en el camión, y pues va viendo lo que va pasando. Y se da cuenta que cuando el agente de la migra para en cada lado —antes había una caseta de la migra en San Isidro, no sé si está en otro lado o en cualquier parte—, elige a quién le pregunta, a quién le va a pedir papeles y a quién no. Y Elías Contreras pues es un indígena pues, no, aunque se ponga pasamontaña, sigue siendo un indígena. Pero

> él había escuchado lo que decían otros, y entonces cuando le pregunta el de la migra "¿your papers?", él dice: "american citizen". Y como lo dijo así chueco, pues el de la migra se lo creyó y logra pasar —no sé por qué pero logra pasar— y se logra dar cuenta de muchas cosas, y nos responde una pregunta fundamental. Porque nosotros preguntábamos si la Otra Campaña también, y la Sexta Declaración, también alcanzaba al norte del Río Bravo. Y el respondió de esta forma a esa pregunta, dijo: "hay más extranjeros en los palacios de gobierno de México, que cruzando el Río Bravo". Y nosotros entendimos ahí que la frontera, la barda, el muro, no había logrado romper lo que nos unía. Y el decía también algo de lo que quiero hablar más: es que hay muchos más muros que hay que brincar.

The story of Elias Contreras, like many of Marcos other characters in his communiqués to the world, sheds insight into a Zapatista Mayan Indian epistemology foreign to the ears and eyes of most of the western world. Elias Contreras clandestine entry into the United States and his navigation through the "treacherous geographies" of the US///Mexico borderlands is more than a story of those that have attempted to cross to "*el otro lado*." His clandestine, limited, and unauthorized border crossing represents a social x-ray of the complex power relations that shape the transfrontera contact zone and the "other side." Similar to my use of Gloria Anzaldua's autoethnography *Borderlands*, Sonia Saldivar-Hull's introduction to *Feminism Along the Border*, or Rosalva Aida Hernandez Castillo's memories of living in Baja California, such vignettes produce more than a rich experiential description of the US/Mexico borderlands. They also situate their theoretical frameworks for approaching the border, and in this case, they help produce insights into the forming relationships between historically situated national counterparts.

Moreover, Elias Contreras manipulation of fixed border identities by acting and speaking like a "Chicano" underlines the troubling reinforcement of these fixed border identities and race making by border communities, state and national policing agencies, and the nation, versus the fluid and transformative possibilities of clandestine identities crossing the border. Gilberto Rosas argues a similar process in his study on transborder

youth living in the sewer systems of Nogales, Arizona and Sonora, where the identities of his informants are constantly shifting due to the management, navigation, and negotiation of a "treacherous geography" produced by the racialized imperial plan of US white supremacy and Mexican national mestizaje. (Rosas, 2006) Chicana/o urban Zapatistas listening to the story of Elias Contreras found resonance in his border crossing not because it reinforced a Chicano identity that is "neither from here nor there" (*ni de aqui, ni de alla*) but instead "from here and there."

It is unclear whether Delegado Zero was aware of this historical tension within Chicana/o identity formation, in his short story of his Zapatista Commission of Investigations fieldworker/anthropologian, Elias Contreras. But we can assume that his analysis stems from a similar process of identity formation between Mayan Indians in Chiapas who see themselves as outcasts and forgotten citizen-subjects of a mestizo Mexico. In fact, we are given a sense of this connection after his story of Elias Contreras. Here he states:

> No sé por qué rara situación, los indígenas zapatistas tienen esa capacidad para reconocer al diferente y respetarlo. Me imagino que algo bueno hice en mi vida que me da la fortuna de estar con ellos y de servirlos. Pero he escuchado y he sabido de comentarios de desprecio, racistas, de gente que se dice progresista, hacia los chicanos, hacia los pochos, hacia los mexicanos de otros lados. Por cómo hablan, por cómo mezclan en esto que se llama el espanglish, por cómo hablan el inglés, por cómo los persiguen. Y los consideran extranjeros, a lo mejor, porque a nosotros como indígenas nos consideran también extranjeros en la tierra que parimos nosotros, que se levantó sobre nosotros.

Comparing such an analysis with Gloria Anzaldua's opening paragraph to *Borderlands/La Frontera*, we find similarities that bridge the sea of differences between two distinctly different communities and geographies. Here, Anzaldua opens:

> The U.S.-Mexican border es una herida abierta where the Third World grates the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture. Borders are set up

> to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal." (Anzaldua, 1986: 25)

What was clear in his presentation to hundreds of Chicanas/os, Mexicanas/os, and Zapatista sympathizers that crossed the border on October 19, 2006 was his ability to connect with the crowd by using a border language familiar to those who are captured by the expanding imaginary of the US///Mexico borderlands. With a humor that many in attendance found a deep connection with, Delegado Zero spoke to the crowd in a code switching language most Chicanos could understand:

> *So* —como dicen ustedes— *let's talk about walls*, vamos a hablar de paredes, y no sólo de esa que se supone que está dividiendo un país a otro, sino la que se empieza a construir en cada lugar donde cada quien trabaja, estudia o vive. La que se alza entre la puerta de la cocina y el resto de la casa para las mujeres. Y que para una mujer salir de ahí significa muchas cosas, o poder salir de ahí. Y que el hombre no cruza, como si fuera un delito cruzar ese muro. Y el muro que se va reproduciendo, o la pared que se va reproduciendo en cada parte de la casa, del hogar, de la calle, del barrio, de la escuela, del centro laboral, del centro de diversión, donde nos empiezan a partir y a dividir unos a otros, y a confrontar. Porque decía Elías Contreras, y nosotros estamos de acuerdo con eso, y nos decía: "es que muchas de esas paredes y esos muros no los levanta el de arriba, los levantamos nosotros o permitimos que existan".

Speaking of walls, borders, and enclosures, Delegado Zero left the crowd with a final analysis of the day's events. For Marcos, a discussion on walls must always be a political project that is reflexive and critical of the borders one creates in his/her daily life. It is here where the power of the Zapatista encuentro and Anzaldua's autohistoriateoria fails to produce a political language, an insurgent language, if it does not become an everyday practice, a social relation. The October 18th and 19th meetings in Tijuana, were an attempt at bridging not only the insurgent language produced by the

Zapatistas but also the other insurgent languages that shared their autohistorias to the crowd of 500 adherents and sympathizers in attendance.

SUMMARY

> to hope, political struggle finds itself naked, bereft of the rusty garb inherited from pain: it is hope which obliges it to look for new forms of struggle, that is, new ways of being political, of doing politics: a new politics, a new political morality, a new political ethic is not just a wish, it is the only way to go forward, to jump to the other side'. (In Holloway, "Zapatismo and the Social Sciences", Subcomandante Marcos—quoted by Rosario Ibarra, La Jornada, 2 de mayo, 1995, p. 22

This chapter speaks to the experiences of people who live, cross, dream of passing the political and geographical borders between nation-states but also to those engage in building the necessary vehicles needed towards understanding human emancipation. Indeed, the result of such a forming approach to the border is the construction of an, "other geography," one that maps power relations from the eyes of the dispossessed and faceless. It attempts in its mapping of horizontal social networks to disrupt the prevailing logic of (neo)colonial mapping of space, culture, and people. Gloria Anzaldua's concept of *autohistoriateoria*, which finds its power in theorizing experience and history onto and through the body, and the Zapatista concept of encuentro, which bridges difference and political resonance through dialogue and actual encounter, intertwine to weave the contours of this new "other geography." It is a geography that sees these historical tensions between racialized ethnic counterparts as "walls." In Delegado Zero's assessment, in much the same way that Frantz Fanon wrote about mental and physical colonialism during the 1950's, or that Gloria Anzaldua wrote so poetically about the Texas///Mexico border, these "walls" are reinforced and built not only by those "above" but also by us.

An example of such an alternative mapping has been described in the actions of a few Chicanas/os, US Mexicans, and Mexican activists, maquila workers, artists, musicians, ponkeros, and community organizers, to name a few, that participated in La Otra Transfronteriza and organized the arrival of Delegado Zero. For these uniquely different groups, the concept of "el otro lado", (the other side) that historically has meant the separation of ethnic Mexican groups living on either side of the Mexico/US border, shifted towards an understanding of the complex history that has separated two countries for almost two centuries. The transborder work between La Otra groups in the US and in Baja California, coalesced by these distinctly different groups, broke down largely understood stereotypes between those in the United States and those living in Mexico. These stereotypes included the organizing styles of Chicanos and Mexicanos in the United States to those of Mexican activists and leftist organizations. For Chicanos working within the Autonomous Peoples Collective in Los Angeles, California, the alliances built across the border gave them better insight to the type of state violence and repression Mexican activists in Tijuana and Baja California went through on a daily basis. Although Chicanos living along the Mexico/US borderlands have historically understood the border as a site for the production of state violence, the interpersonal work with La Otra groups in Baja California contextualized the Mexican experience as affectively connected. On the other hand, for Mexican La Otra members in Baja, the participation of Chicanos within the La Otra Transfronteriza organizing dismantled notions of imperial privilege that third world activists often have of first world activists, especially those in the United States.

Yet, Anzaldua's *autohistoriateoria* and the Zapatista concept of *encuentro* are not enough to fully bridge the historical differences that are shaped by the reinforcement of the Mexico/US border. What the ethnographic example of the La Otra caravan through

Baja California demonstrates is that dialogue and encounter must be accompanied by a form of organization or direct action. Having participated in the organizing leading up to the caravan and the actual security for the weeklong event, I observed that prevalent attitudes towards Chicanas/os participating in the events changed when collaborative work was accomplished. Mexican views on Chicana/o urban Zapatistas transformed not only when experiences were contextualized—through autohistoriateoria and encuentro—but when they witnessed and worked alongside Chicana/o urban Zapatistas on grueling and long days of work in preparation of the caravan's arrival. The end result of such complicated encounters and articulations of "other geographies" are crucial sites of further investigation in order to understand the trajectory and direction Chicana/o urban Zapatismo will take not only in Los Angeles but throughout the Americas.

Late Night on October 19th, 2006, near the entrance to the Tijuana///San Ysidro Border

The border is relatively calm. The long lines and hours of waiting that usually form along the main entrance into the United States are small compared to the evening mix of migrants coming into the United States from Mexico's interior and the thousands of Americans that cross the US///Mexico border and return from Tijuana's famous red light districts. The road to the border is filled with elderly men selling traditional Mexican blankets with American logos of professional football and baseball teams. Indigenous women with their children ask for change along the side of the road. A much younger man pushes a cart of boiling oil, selling *churros* and other sweet delicacies to cars slowly crawling nearer to the border posts. As you get closer and closer to the infamous border post, where US immigration agents ask you for your identification and citizenship status, along with some of the most random questions to make sure you are not crossing or bringing anything "illegally" into the country, you notice the peddlers

near the border posts are mostly physically challenged men and women who have lost limbs or born with physical abnormalities.

Felicia keeps her truck on park, while the line gets shorter but still moves slow enough for her not to keep pushing the gas every five feet. She turns to her right and looks at the large billboard jumbotron that marks the last hundred feet to the border. Local Tijuana ads for various plastic surgery operations that include nose reconstruction, lasics eye surgery, and breast implants, pop up on the jumbotron at various points. Other ads ask motorists waiting in line if they need help registering their car in the United States or if they need to send money securely back to Mexico. Underneath the colorful ads, a stream of text, from left to right, crosses Felicia's eyes. "*Rosita, te quiero mucho, perdoname*." Felicia laughs but stops before she makes too much noise, since the rest of the compañeras in the truck are soundly asleep. She wonders, "what if I send a text? That would be hilarious!" She takes out her mobile phone to start writing her text but decides against it since the smooth flow of traffic takes her off park and moving closer to the border.

At three cars to her arrival, she starts trying to wake up her companions. "Hey everyone, wake up! Ya llegamos!" Sleepy eye after sleepy eye starts to open to the bright lights of the US immigration and customs post. Felicia notices a shift change in border agents. The middle aged white woman border agent is relieved of duty by a brown male border agent. "Oh shit! Mujeres, let's start waking up, they got a brotha on the line." Her awkwardness at seeing the brown Mexican-origin man replace the white border agent is a familiar response by those who cross the US///Mexico border. Many Mexicanos and Chicanos agree that the most difficult border agents and border patrol officers they encounter along the US///Mexico border zone are either white males or Mexican-origin agents.

As everyone awakens and begins to look through their belongings for their identifications, Felicia makes sure everyone has their story straight as to where they were for the last fifteen hours. "Let's say we were in Rosarito," exclaims Marisol from the backseat. Felicia looks at her dashboard and sees several bundles of ceremonial sage tied in red yarn. She remembers that they are carrying various danzante instruments and clothes in the back and starts to think that the, "we were partying," excuse will probably not work. They collectively decide to go with a, "we were at a ceremony" story.

The red light turns green, allowing the next car to approach the border agent. Felicia drives up to the booth and opens her window. The young brown border agent asks her for her identification and her citizenship. "American," she states. The border agent walks around the car, sees the rest of the women inside the car and asks them for their identification. He takes a careful look at their ID's and mumbles, "so where are you ladies coming from?" Before arriving to the post, they had decided Felicia would talk to the agent. She responds, "from a ceremonia."

"A what?" responds the border agent.

"A ceremonia near Ensenada." Felicia proceeds.

The border agent starts his line of questioning with more caution. "And what's that on your dash?"

Felicia keeps her answers short and simple. "It's sage. For our ceremonies."

"Ceremonies? What kind of ceremonies?" He again peeks into the truck.

Felicia responds, "You know, for indigenous ceremonies."

"But you all aren't Indian?" He says it skeptically. "It says here that you all are from Los Angeles. Oh wait, you are all are like those Aztec dancers, right?" He walks back to his post, punches a few buttons on his computer and proceeds to walk towards Felicia's window.

"Go ahead. Welcome to the United States."

REFLECTION

Writing an "Other" Ethnography for an "Other" Los Angeles

Delegado Zero during the Tijuana Other Campaign Meetings, Oct. 2006
Photo and Flyer by Rage One

> I am possessed by a vision: that we Chicanas and Chicanos have taken back or uncovered our true faces, our dignity and self-respect. It's a validation vision. Seeing the Chicana anew in light of her history. I seek an exoneration, a seeing through the fictions of white supremacy, a seeing of ourselves in our true guises and not as the false racial personality that has been given to us and that we have given to ourselves. I seek our woman's face, our true features, the positive and the negative seen clearly, free of the tainted biases of male dominance. I seek new images of identity, new beliefs about ourselves, our humanity and worth no longer in question. Gloria Anzaldua, Borderlands/La Frontera

The October 2006 meetings with *la Comisión Sexta* and Delegado Zero in Tijuana resulted in a significant shift within *La Otra Campaña* and especially *La Otra Transfronteriza.* The next two months of the caravan would lead to different locations along the Mexico/US border and parts of Northern Mexico. In each location that the

caravan arrived they experienced a different dynamic specific to the trans-border communities of the borderlands region. For instance, once the caravan arrived to the major border city of Juarez, they encountered a different set of issues those living along the El Paso/Juarez border faced on a daily basis. Border militarization, drug violence, human rights violations, and the unsolved murders of hundreds of women were the focus during the Juarez meetings. At one point during the Juarez meetings, a march lead by Other Campaign participants and el Delegado Zero reached the top of the international bridge that crossed into the United States. At that point, they were met by armed Homeland Security officers who shut down the bridge and hovered over in armed helicopters.

Back in Los Angeles, the post-Tijuana meetings had a different impact. The tensions and misunderstandings between the Autonomous Peoples Collective and the *La Otra en el Otro Lado* (LOOL) network continued unscathed by the positive energy created during the Tijuana encuentros. Weeks after the October meetings, *La Otra Transfronteriza* met in East Los Angeles for a report back on the committee work and a plan for further projects that came out of the encuentros. Although it was difficult for many to get visas to cross the border to the United States, La Otra groups and individuals from Baja California, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Los Angeles, arrived to hear the report backs from everyone who worked on the planning for the late October event. During the meetings, many of the tensions that had accumulated during the few weeks leading up to the caravan up until the caravan left resurfaced in terms of how things were organized and who was to blame for oversights in the preparation.

Internally, there was another reaction to the October encuentros. During a reflection meeting at the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE, Autonomous Peoples Collective (APC) members and other groups and individuals who had worked with APC on going to

Tijuana, spoke on the overall successes and failures of the meetings and their preparation. In what I assumed would be a congratulatory discussion between ourselves on the hard work we did during the planning of the encuentros, in light of all the "drama" leading up to the event, I found a different sentiment amongst many of those in attendance, especially when it came to the gender dynamics of the organizing.

What I saw as positive, the women in the group saw as silencing. Many of the Chicana and Mexicana organizers who worked on the preparation for the meetings in Los Angeles expressed their concern that there was a lack of communication between those that were in Baja California working with the caravan and those still in Los Angeles. They expressed concern about the choice for all men to be on the caravan and that the security detail for the Delegado Zero were all women. I saw their point in terms of how it may have been perceived that the men in the group were the "go to" figures during the caravan but disagreed that it was planned in this way. Olmeca, Joel, Gerardo, and myself had not wanted to take on the type of responsibility we ended up taking while working security for the caravan. Because some of the other La Otra groups from the states had not completed with their responsibilities, many of the tasks were left to us to perform. As for the claim that the security was primarily men, we again disagreed with this point since we tried throughout the Tijuana meetings to democratize the process and included both men and women to help with security. In fact, Delegado Zero's secondary security was made up of primarily women Brown Berets from Watsonville, California. What I later realized after reflecting on these heated discussions was that the differences in opinion were a mirror to broader gendered power relations within APC that had formed themselves well before the October meetings in Tijuana. These issues would not necessarily fracture the work I did with Chicana urban Zapatistas but it did with other

men in APC. This would be one of the main reasons for APC's eventual hibernation as a network.

Another important issue raised during our meeting was the impact the Other Campaign had on our local autonomous organizing. Was the amount of time and energy used to coordinate and organize with La Otra groups in Baja California taking from our own local organizing or our goal of furthering "autonomy" in Los Angeles, California? While some of us tried to weave both tasks together, others made a valid point that the goal of autonomous community building was suffering by our attention on more glamorous activism in Mexico. The work of Chicana/o autonomous organizing has always had a significant solidarity focus. Since Chicana/o urban Zapatismo develops from the solidarity between Chicana/o activists, artists, and musicians and the Zapatistas it is inherently a part of its political and structural makeup. But at times, the focus on solidarity took from the local organizing that many Chicana/o autonomous groups wanted to solidify and build upon.

Casa del Pueblo members, for instance, believed in building solidarity efforts with the Zapatistas, having in fact a long relationship with several Zapatista indigenous communities in Chiapas. But they also agreed that most of the people working on autonomous organizing are already pulled in many directions in terms of time commitments and responsibilities. Supporting the Other Campaign in this case was a form of solidarity and not necessarily tied to the building of stronger social networks.

The Eastside Café ECHOSPACE, on the other hand, saw the Other Campaign work as part of their political arm and made it a weekly part of their scheduling. Questions having to do with the Other Campaign and the events occurring in Mexico, during the presidential elections, were of great concern to many Eastside Café members.

This focused their work on organizing with La Otra Transfronteriza and allowed for the Eastside Café to broaden their work outside of the El Sereno community.

We continued deep into the early hours of the night discussing, how then do we create a "checks and balances" process where vertical decision making methods, gender politics, overstepping personal boundaries, and communication are a part of our organizing and not left behind for the overall goal or end result. Many of these questions were not resolved at this meeting and several personal relationships were greatly affected by the power dynamics that grew out of the *La Otra Campaña* organizing.

The differences that surfaced after the Tijuana Other Campaign meetings impacted local autonomous organizing greatly. Many members of the Autonomous Peoples Collective stopped coming to meetings and began their own offshoot collectives. Although I did not notice any Autonomous Peoples Collective member or space outright mention that they would not work with other APC members, the differences did stall an attempt at solidifying a growing network of autonomous spaces and organizations. A void, in effect, was left behind for those autonomous spaces and organizations that came after. These differences, of course, stem from much larger issues within groups, individuals, and spaces. The organizing around the Other Campaign only helped to surface some of the already growing tensions between groups and individuals. Although this dissertation has focused on the creation and development of these organizations, collectives, and networks, the inter/intra-politics within and between collectives and members has been only mentioned. This is a theme I hope to analyze and reflect upon in future research initiatives and political organizing.

Reflections on an "Autonomy Road"

By December 2006, I began the difficult process of tying loose ends on my two years working in Los Angeles, California. I was returning to Austin in January to take on an adjunct professor position in the Center for Mexican American Studies and an opportunity to start the long process of deciphering the data I had collected during my fieldwork. I decided to use my last month in Los Angeles as a time to reflect on the two years working towards autonomy and the impact the final organizing with the Mexican Other Campaign had on autonomous organizing in Los Angeles. Although I left Los Angeles during an uncertain time in terms of the Chicana/o participation within the Mexican Other Campaign, the time away allowed me the opportunity to think through many of the research questions I arrived to Los Angeles wanting to investigate and answer. The following section is a reflection and recap of Chicana/o autonomous organizing in Los Angeles, California.

Autonomy Road

This dissertation is titled, "Autonomy Road": the Cultural Politics of Chicana/o Autonomous Organizing in Los Angeles, California. The term "Autonomy Road" refers to one of two street signs used in the Zapatista-inspired Chicano rock group, Quetzal's, video for their song, *Jarocho Elegua*. In the music video, the music group travels to a crossroads where two distinct street signs point in different directions. The street sign on the left says, "Pop stardom" and the street sign on the right says, "Autonomy Rd." At first the group chooses the path of "Pop stardom." There they encounter the artificiality of the mainstream music business. Uneasy about the clothes they must wear to fit in and the music they must perform to make "Pop stardom," the group travels back to the crossroads and instead chooses the path leading towards "Autonomy Rd." Once on the "Autonomy Rd." they find a different relationship with their music, their audience, and

themselves. Here they represent walking on the "Autonomy Rd." as a path towards making a connection with their audience by performing almost next to their audience. They also see this path as one that focuses on building community. Where the path towards pop stardom led them to the superficiality of the mainstream record business, the other path reflected in their collective decision making as a group. The video comes to a conclusion with the Afro-Caribbean trickster character *Elegua* spinning the street signs after Quetzal chooses the direction of an, "Autonomy Road," to the "Pop Stardom" sign. Such a lasting impression represents the thin line between walking on an, "Autonomy Road," and that which leads towards "Pop Stardom."

This dissertation is symbolic of this thin interstitial line that is drawn from Quetzal's musical video, *Jarocho Elegua*. It is written almost fifteen years after the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellions that so many Chicana/o urban Zapatistas discuss as a watershed moment in their lives and thirteen years after the other major watershed moment, the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico. It also originates as a research project from my prior political and scholarly work that looks at the impact and resonance of the Zapatistas on US "people of color" organizing and of course its impact on Chicana/o cultural production and political organizing. For a very long time I asked, what is it that resonates so loudly about the Zapatistas for Chicanas/os and how does this affect the lives of Chicanas/os in the United States. Few anthropological case studies on social movements, in particular, focused on political and cultural resonance. Those few studies that indirectly focused on political resonance analyzed how networks, webs, circuits of struggle, and social movements used the latest forms of technologies and forms of communication to inform, organize, situate, and act against capital's latest formation. In this case, I found interviews with dozens of Chicana/o artists, musicians, activists, and community organizers who were self-identified as Zapatista inspired telling of how these

networks were built, what purpose they served, and how this coincided with their own urge to trans-locally organize in Los Angeles. My research on political resonance found that while the building of networks and webs, both for the purpose of strengthening solidarity efforts with the Zapatistas and expanding the effectiveness of these networks, was a key process towards understanding why the Zapatistas had such a pronounced impact on Chicana/o activists, artists, musicians, and community organizers, it was not the only one used to define political resonance. Some characteristics of political resonance did not have anything to do with the building of networks and webs. In fact, early Chicana/o solidarity with the Zapatistas, especially that of Chicana/o youth, grew not because of already established networks and webs but instead because of the politics and experiences that found similar ears between the Zapatista indigenous communities who faced everyday forms of oppression, discrimination, and second class citizenship and Chicana/o youth in Los Angeles, California who saw these forms of oppression and discrimination as similar to the ones they faced on a daily basis in East Los Angeles barrios. This form of resonance seemed to translate in both political and cultural expressions by Chicana/o youth who tasted their first form of political activism by organizing around issues of police abuse, educational inequity, and recent anti-immigration legislation. Eventually, through the development of a transnational politics that saw Chicanas/os go back and forth from Los Angeles to Chiapas through peace and solidarity delegations, the resonance was contextualized as a politics of building autonomy in their neighborhoods.

The concepts of "autonomy" and "autonomous organizing" would resonate the loudest for Chicana/o youth who moved on from solidarity and began the long process of translating the resonance to political and cultural practice. My first assumptions were that autonomy and autonomous organizing was a re-inscription of prior notions of self-

determination prevalent during the Chicano movement of the 1960s. While this is undoubtedly a source, showing continuity by racialized ethnic groups in Los Angeles, to combat racism, economic inequality, and gender inequity, the moments before and after the 1992 Rebellions and the 1994 uprising showed a resilience for questioning prior fixed cultural identity formations that had been institutionalized in the city and in the seats of power, as the city of Los Angeles became predominantly non-white and Latino. A new form of cultural production around art, music, and performance became tied to the everyday organizing of Zapatista-inspired Chicanos in Los Angeles. Autonomy and the politics of autonomy followed this resurgence in cultural production as a bridge between political action, community building, and cultural expression. Where only a decade prior, Zapatista-inspired Chicanas/os felt a sense of "loneliness and despair", a new politics of autonomy, inspired by the Zapatistas, gave them a rejuvenated sense of place and community.

The day to day work with the Eastside Café ECHOSPACE, the networking with the Autonomous Peoples Collective, the solidarity work with the South Central Farm, and the cross-border organizing with "other campaign" groups in Los Angeles and Baja California offer an ethnographic nuance that I discovered connected Chicana/o urban Zapatistas to a "place", or what I refer to as "commons", in the wake of literature on globalization and the global city that focused on the de-territoriality of the current era of globalization. Place, or commons, was a space to organize through for many Chicana/o urban Zapatistas, after a long period of conceptualizing autonomy as a placeless form of "self-organization." It became one of the basic units for building "community." While traditional anthropological studies on ethnic Mexicans in the United States focused on "community" in terms of the creation of the "barrio" as the main unit of analysis, oftentimes pathologizing the people who lived in these spaces; the social, economic, and

demographic makeup of the barrio had changed in Los Angeles since the late 1960s in significant ways. Place-making became a crucial component of barrio dwellers who were now a moving population, by the millions, across national boundaries. From this dynamic, autonomy and autonomous organizing emerge. And yet, left out of the equation, and an important discussion in my dissertation is how in the process of building autonomy through these commons, self-organization means something more than contesting the neoliberalization of the city or the racial regimes of the region, it also became apparent that those Chicana/o urban Zapatistas I worked with were attempting at changing the ways in which they related to each other, the realm of power and social relations. These spaces were the laboratories for developing social relations that were not dependent on the market form, on individualism, or on the privatization of everyday life. Successes and failures, which are measurements in most social science studies, are hard to apply when faced with social relations and value practices. A zero-sum game fails to account for the constituent production of political and cultural resonance that autonomy has produced throughout Los Angeles. That is to say, social relations become value practices when they are practiced daily and resonate with other forming "communities." I argue that Chicana/o urban Zapatismo offers this as an intervention.

FINAL REMARKS ON AN ACTIVIST ANTHROPOLOGY ETHNOGRAPHY

> By studying the impact of this movement, we cannot but recognize that it is not just a "case," a curiosity or a "model" for sociologists, anthropologists, political philosophers or critical cultural theorists interested in multicultural education. In drawing different lessons from the Zapatistas, we are not constructing an ideal type or the "best" representation of what is happening at the grassroots. We do hope, however, that [it] will contribute towards explaining why such culturally diverse groups of peoples continue to find this movement to be particularly relevant to their own struggles. (Esteva and Prakash, 1998:7)

This dissertation has also engaged itself in a current anthropological debate concerning the role of the anthropologist within social movements and the use of activist research as a method of data collection. Charles R. Hale, for instance, has made the argument that activist research produces similar if not better results than traditional ethnographic studies. (Hale, 2001) In Hale's analysis, traditional methods of conducting fieldwork are based on questions of objectivity in the production of empirical knowledge. Activist and politically engaged research for Hale, lends itself to a much deeper and ethical analysis that traditional empirical research might leave out for fear of failing to be objective throughout the research design and fieldwork. For Hale and others who agree with Hale's assessment, the tensions and contradictions that appear during an activist research project actually offer an opportunity to collectively produce scholarship that is holistic in nature and that is directly looking at political questions of inequality, oppression, violence and other conditions related to human suffering.[45] Such activist research projects that include those being researched as integral partners in collecting data may provide and develop the necessary tools to develop strategies and tactics at making effective intervention in terms of policy or direct action.

Other scholars have gone a step further than Hale and looked at activist research situated from within a particular radical political position, calling for a "militant researcher" that produces "militant research." (Shukaitis, Graeber, and Biddle: 2007) This perspective focuses on the power relations between the anthropologists, the subjects of study, and the knowledge produced from the research. For scholars like Shukaitis, Graeber and Biddle, the role of the militant researcher comes not from "the perspective of the theorist removed and separate from organizing, but rather from within and as part of

[45] This is Charles R. Hale's emphasis in his argument for activist research.

the multiple and overlapping cycles and circuits of struggle." (Shukaitis, Graeber, Biddle: 2007) Here the tensions and contradictions that are of concern for Hale are situated differently for these militant scholars. The question of activist research is not a question of whether they produce *better* research results but instead if they speak through the movements and transformations occurring in social movements. The militant researcher in this case is from the beginning a part of the research and in that same line of thought a subject of study.

Shuakaitis, Graeber, and Biddle, also argue that the question of conducting militant research is not a pedagogical exercise, or with the purpose of teaching about the social movements being investigated and researched. This creates, in their opinion, a compartmentalization of these social movements; a bottling of their transformative possibilities and capabilities historically found in such fields of study like anthropology. Here they state:

> Trying to put a name on the directions of tomorrow's revolutionary fervor is for that reason perhaps a bit suspicious, even if well-intended, because the process of tacking a name on something is often the first step in institutionalizing it, in fixing it—it is the process that transforms the creativity of the constituent moment back upon itself into another constituted form of alienating structure. (Shuakaitis, Graeber, and Biddle, 2007: 32)

If the question of activist research and militant research is not solely focused on the idea of producing better results or a pedagogical question then I argue that it is tied to the genealogical recovery and depository of Chicana/o radicalism and activism or what Emma Perez theorizes as the "decolonial imaginary." (Perez, 1999) In this regard, this dissertation is by no means an activist manual or complete history of Chicana/o urban Zapatismo in Los Angeles, California or in the United States. And I hesitate to label it as activist or militant research. It does not attempt to be so. It is a political reflection, an open process, as Shukaitis, Graeber, and Biddle argue, a fissure within the "constituent

moment", and an attempt at uncovering the silences of those experiences and stories that are at the margins within the long history of Chicana/os in Los Angeles and the United States as discussed by Emma Perez.

In this case, I argue that "political reflection" is a situated political position to take as an anthropologist. It is a position stemming from Chicana/o urban Zapatistas in their everyday organizing and interaction with the many communities they are a part of in Los Angeles, California. It is also a part of the long process of working towards "autonomy" in Chicana/o communities throughout Los Angeles. As a component of producing a research plan, conducting activist research, or deciphering data from my fieldwork, political reflection refracts with the same mixing and innovation that transforms Chicana/o subjectivity. It attempts to be as tedious and politically ethical as those who argue for "activist research" and "militant research."

The hesitancy, then, to not label it as "activist research" as it is discussed by Charles R. Hale or "militant research" as it is discussed by Shuakaitis, Graeber, and Biddle is the political aspiration that it may resonate without constraint or guidance to others who may read about Chicana/o urban Zapatismo and find inspiration on what I have chosen to write about. Yet, more than a reflection and exercise in un-silencing history, I am aware that in the process of writing this history of Chicana/o urban Zapatismo it may teach lessons to those who may read it besides finding resonance in my analysis and the experiences I include to support my analysis. This paradox is central to understanding the methodological approach I took while conducting fieldwork.

I position myself throughout this dissertation in conversation with these different sets of scholars. But clearly this conversation is not enough to understand my positionality within the Chicana/o autonomous organizations and Chicana/o urban Zapatistas I worked with while I conducted my fieldwork in Los Angeles, California. It

is an uncomfortable position that I may have to leave for further reflection and exploration since it is a position that is centered on concurrently being not only an activist anthropologist but also a Chicano urban Zapatista.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

> This city is sick. When its illness becomes a crisis, it will be cured. This collective loneliness, multiplied by millions and potent, will end by finding itself and finding the reason for its impotence. Then, and only then, this city will lose the grey of its dress and will adorn itself with the brightly-colored ribbons which are abundant in the province. (Sub-comandate Marcos, Durito V, June 1995)

The 710 freeway from Long Beach to Pasadena is a thoroughfare of heavy machinery big rig semi-trucks and autos stemming from the Long Beach and San Pedro ports towards the communities of El Sereno, Monterrey Park, and Alhambra. In fact, the 710 freeway sign that says "Pasadena" is nothing more than a vision of what the freeway could be if several poor and working class communities weren't in the way of its connection to the 210 and 134 Pasadena freeways several miles away. Caltrans, the state transportation department responsible for the forward looking freeway sign, decided almost thirty years ago that a highway channeling the Pasadena freeways with the 710 would connect another transportation artery to the many other veins of freeways and roads that connect motorists to one another throughout the Los Angeles megaplex. The problem with such a plan of course is the dozens of homes and residential areas that would be affected by the underground construction of the tunnel and the increase of noise and congestion from the steady stream of traffic the expansion would create. Once again, thinking ahead, Caltrans decided to purchase and reclaim miles of homes at prices well under the market value in order to make the project easier to complete.

What Caltrans did not predict in their audacity towards moving ahead with the construction of the highway was that many of the tenants living in these Caltrans homes

would one day protest against its fail-proof plan. Poor working class communities like that of El Sereno, who for decades withstood the creation of freeways and highways through their community, saw the freeway expansion project as another attempt at displacing and destroying years of strong community ties predicated on the resistance of another dividing freeway project by the city of Los Angeles and the state of California.

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Upon a spring 2009 visit to Los Angeles, California, I met up with Roberto F. for lunch at a strip mall outside of the University of Southern California campus, near downtown Los Angeles. I made it a priority to always set time during my short visits to Los Angeles to talk with Roberto F. since I considered him an elder, someone who I could talk to about almost anything. Our conversations of course were always visionary, since Roberto F. and myself were constantly talking about the possibilities and utopias our communities needed. It is not to say that we didn't talk about concrete organizing or about other things, but it is always best to talk about dreams with people who share them as well.

I arrived early to our rendezvous, writing on a legal pad several questions and thoughts I wanted to share with Beto. I was sure he wanted to talk about other things so I made my list short. Beto arrived ten minutes after I did and we decided to have lunch at a nearby cafeteria that had a selection of world foods from different countries. He suggested we try the salmon teriyaki since it was a healthy alternative to the other selections available at the cafeteria. Beto was on a strict diet and we always seemed to meet at either a Mexican restaurant that had grilled fish tacos or another restaurant with some sort of seafood. We sat down inside the cafeteria just as the lunch crowd walked in from the USC campus for lunch.

We began our conversation talking about school, work, our families, our health; all subjects that may seem outside of the political realm of community organizing but Beto never separated them. For Beto, and this was true for many of the comrades I made in Los Angeles, the personal was very much the political. It may have not always been that way but the ramifications of community organizing seemed to have a unique bond with everyday people's lives that one could not separate them wholeheartedly.

Eventually, half way through our meal, I looked at my legal pad and asked Beto some questions that I could not tie together in the dissertation.

"Take for instance, Pablo, the recent project some of the new cafeter@s are doing at the Eastside Café. Sirena and I have started working with several Cal State Los Angeles students and some other community members on a community *consulta* (a consultation) about what should be done with the bungalows right in back of the Eastside Café. We have been going around every Saturday to each of the neighbors around the bungalows and asking them what they thought should be done with them."

I knew of the bungalows in back of the Eastside Café. They were an ugly site of several small shacks that were abandoned, fenced off, and empty. Used mostly as a meeting place for winos and *tecatos*, the bungalows were owned by Caltrans and they had recently informed Beto that they were scheduled for demolition if there wasn't a viable plan for using the strange landmark in El Sereno. City officials in El Sereno and South Pasadena both had different views of what should be done with the bungalows but the Eastside Café, and Beto in particular, were asked what they thought should be done with the property. Of course our first thought was some form of community center that could house multimedia and art rooms. But our visions for the bungalows were just that, "ours."

"We could easily say to Caltrans that a community media and arts center would be a great idea but that would be our idea, not the El Sereno community's idea. That is how we came up with the idea of a consulta. We can go and ask the neighbors what they think it should be used for, collect the data and then give it to the appropriate people, the neighbors." We both chuckled a bit since giving it to the city council representative for the El Sereno area wasn't something we were thinking of doing in the first place.

"Think about it this way, it is not only asking them what they think should be done with the bungalows but it is also introducing ourselves to the El Sereno community. It might be that they decide they don't want the bungalows. They just want it demolished since drugs and alcohol are all that surround the plot of land. But that isn't as important as starting to get to know each other and building that relationship we are going to need later on."

I could tell Beto was thinking ahead and that this project could be a way to think through the questions and disconnects I still had during the writing process of the dissertation. After almost fifteen years of Zapatista-inspired political work, what successes could we acknowledge accomplishing and what failures along the way had we stumbled across? Was autonomy and autonomous organizing in Los Angeles a dream, a vision, or utopia that would always slip through our hands? Or was I just being too melodramatic about a much longer and strenuous path that communities in Los Angeles had yet to encounter?

Of course, thinking about successes and failures were helpful in times of political reflection, but the many histories of struggle in barrios and ghettos in Los Angeles did not warrant this type of approach, whether we were successful or not in changing the material conditions around us. Acceptance of the highs and lows in our everyday organizing was

part of bridging our past with the present in order to create our future; or as the Zapatistas have taught us, it is a way to "walk while asking."

Appendix I

EZLN - WOMEN'S REVOLUTIONARY LAW

In their just fight for the liberation of our people, the EZLN incorporates women in the revolutionary struggle regardless of their race, creed, color or political affiliation, requiring only that they meet the demands of the exploited people and that they commit to the laws and regulations of the revolution. As well as, taking account of the situation of the woman worker in Mexico, the revolution incorporates their just demands of equality and justice in the following Women's Revolutionary Law.

First--Women, regardless of their race, creed, color or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in any way that their desire and capacity determine.

Second--Women have the right to work and receive a just salary.

Third--Women have the right to decide the number of children they have and care for.

Fourth--Women have the right to participate in the matters of the community and have charge if they are free and democratically elected.

Fifth--Women and their children have the right to Primary Attention in their health and nutrition.

Sixth--Women have the right to education.

Seventh--Women have the right to choose their partner and are not obliged to enter into marriage.

Eighth--Women have the right to be free of violence from both relatives and strangers. Rape and attempted rape will be severely punished.

Ninth--Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces.

Tenth--Women will have all the rights and obligations which the revolutionary laws and regulations give.

Appendix II

FANDANGO SIN FRONTERAS

1. Adios Reforma ilusional
2. Tu amistad me hace mal
3. Bienvenida Autonomía
4. digna forma de luchar
5. Adios vanguardia tu vista al poder
6. Arriba hacia abajo,
7. nunca...nunca mas aceptaré
8. Adios Politico corrupto
9. La traición es tu conducto
10. Bienvenida Autonomía
11. Independencia tu producto
12. Adios Idea Neo liberal
13. Suicidal Competitividad
14. Bienvenida Autonomia
15. In ter su je ti vi dad
16. Vivirlo es lograrlo
17. así cambiamos hoy
18. El poder esta en mis manos
19. A nadie se lo doy
20. Bienvenida Autonomía
21. Nací con el poder
22. Bienvenida Autonomía
23. Ya…ya lo puedo ejercer

[Music: El Zapateado]

CARACOLES EN CHIAPAS

1. Caracol pa tu misión: la auto educación
2. De vuestras experiencias vuestra vision
3. This is our home--vuestra decisión
4. Supremacy of Spanish
5. desde tiempo colonial
6. Tsotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal,
7. aquí son principal
8. This is our home: Nuestra igualdad
9. Governments teach neoliberal domination
10. Autonomous education only for liberation
11. This is our home: Our Declaration
12. Direct participation a través de la asamblea,
13. Todos somos lideres no lease quien sea-
14. This is our home: Nuestra Gran Idea

15. Mujer, hombre, niño, anciano,
16. el pasamontañas nos hace igual
17. Lideres – diferentes pero ninguno especial
18. Nuestro Proceso --nuestro espiral
19. Conectar caracoles
20. La sexta nos incita
21. Construir Agendas Sociales…
22. Redes Trans na cion a les
23. Compas nos invitan
24. Shhh—Silenciar las armas –
25. abrir corazón y mente
26. Escucha atentamente
27. las palabras de la gente
[Music: El Barrio]
Autonomy efforts in Northeast LA
1. Welcome to the Eastside Café –you got a space?
2. Find yourself in lyrical rhythmic waves of Ska/Raggae
3. Imagine all you really are –it's already taking place
4. A place of connection not concentration
5. Building community networks for all needs in all directions
6. Miss, miss, a cup of dialogical reflection?
7. Learning to rebuild community by re- membering itself
8. Relearning how to learn together with everyone else
9. Welcome to our echospace, you need some help? You need some help? You need some help?
10. Dispersed through migration, lost in translation we roam
11. To Learn who we are-we're calling our ancestors home
12. At Eastside Café?—yes our intellectual coffee is organically grown!
13. Nos tiran como basura nos usan como ganado
14. Ningún Humano es illegal—Todo Ser Sagrado
15. Welcome to the Eastside Cafe –siéntate aquí lado a lado
16. Deconstructing and resisting
17. necessary to see and be
18. Reconstructing our community—
19. our main activity
20. Welcome to the Echospace…
21. A cup of creativity?
22. It's our specialty
23. Only if we build it… is Another World possible
24. Your participation is essential… indispensable
25. Connected Autonomous communities make it realizable
26. Sipping mental mochas will awaken your dreams
27. Open Mic flows unfold our strategies

28. Youth networks: structures of accountability
29. Welcome: Aquí responsabilidad sin rango
30. Bienvenidos: el mundo desde abajo
31. Welcome: para el sistema un relajo
32. Y aquí empieza el Fandango
[Music: Luna Negra]

Appendix III

THE SIXTH DECLARATION OF THE LACANDON JUNGLE

VI. How We Are Going To Do It

And so this is our simple word that goes out to the humble and simple people of Mexico and of the world, and we are calling our word of today:

Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona
And we are here to say, with our simple word, that:

- The EZLN maintains its commitment to an offensive ceasefire, and it will not make any attack against government forces or any offensive military movements.
- The EZLN still maintains its commitment to insisting on the path of political struggle through this peaceful initiative which we are now undertaking. The EZLN continues, therefore, in its resolve to not establish any kind of secret relations with either national political-military organizations or those from other countries.
- The EZLN reaffirms its commitment to defend, support and obey the zapatista indigenous communities of which it is composed, and which are its supreme command, and - without interfering in their internal democratic processes - will, to the best of its abilities, contribute to the strengthening of their autonomy, good government and improvement in their living conditions. In other words, what we are going to do in Mexico and in the world, we are going to do without arms, with a civil and peaceful movement, and without neglecting nor ceasing to support our communities.

Therefore:

In the World:
1. We will forge new relationships of mutual respect and support with persons and organizations who are resisting and struggling against neoliberalism and for humanity.
2. As far as we are able, we will send material aid such as food and handicrafts for those brothers and sisters who are struggling all over the world.

In order to begin, we are going to ask the Good Government Junta of La Realidad to loan their truck, which is called "Chompiras" and which appears to hold 8 tons, and we are going to fill it with maize and perhaps two 200 liter cans with oil or petrol, as they prefer, and we are going to deliver it to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico for them to send to the Cuban people as aid from the zapatistas for their resistance against the North American blockade. Or perhaps there might be a place closer to here where it could be delivered, because it's always such a long distance to Mexico City, and what if “Chompiras” were to

break down and we'd end up in bad shape. And that will happen when the harvest comes in, which is turning green right now in the fields, and if they don't attack us, because if we were to send it during these next few months, it would be nothing but corncobs, and they don't turn out well even in tamales, better in November or December, it depends.

And we are also going to make an agreement with the women's crafts cooperatives in order to send a good number of bordados, embroidered pieces, to the Europes which are perhaps not yet Union, and perhaps we'll also send some organic coffee from the Zapatista cooperatives, so that they can sell it and get a little money for their struggle. And, if it isn't sold, then they can always have a little cup of coffee and talk about the anti-neoliberal struggle, and if it's a bit cold then they can cover themselves up with the Zapatista bordados, which do indeed resist quite well being laundered by hand and by rocks, and, besides, they don't run in the wash.

And we are also going to send the indigenous brothers and sisters of Bolivia and Ecuador some non-transgenic maize, and we just don't know where to send them so they arrive complete, but we are indeed willing to give this little bit of aid.

3. And to all of those who are resisting throughout the world, we say there must be other intercontinental encuentros held, even if just one other. Perhaps December of this year or next January, we'll have to think about it. We don't want to say just when, because this is about our agreeing equally on everything, on where, on when, on how, on who. But not with a stage where just a few speak and all the rest listen, but without a stage, just level and everyone speaking, but orderly, otherwise it will just be a hubbub and the words won't be understood, and with good organization everyone will hear and jot down in their notebooks the words of resistance from others, so then everyone can go and talk with their compañeros and compañeras in their worlds. And we think it might be in a place that has a very large jail, because what if they were to repress us and incarcerate us, and so that way we wouldn't be all piled up, prisoners, yes, but well organized, and there in the jail we could continue the intercontinental encuentros for humanity and against neoliberalism. Later on we'll tell you what we shall do in order to reach agreement as to how we're going to come to agreement. Now that is how we're thinking of doing what we want to do in the world.
Now follows:

In Mexico:
1. We are going to continue fighting for the Indian peoples of Mexico, but now not just for them and not with only them, but for all the exploited and dispossessed of Mexico, with all of them and all over the country. And when we say all the exploited of Mexico, we are also talking about the brothers and sisters who have had to go to the United States in search of work in order to survive.
2. We are going to go to listen to, and talk directly with, without intermediaries or mediation, the simple and humble of the Mexican people, and, according to what we hear

and learn, we are going to go about building, along with those people who, like us, are humble and simple, a national program of struggle, but a program which will be clearly of the left, or anti-capitalist, or anti-neoliberal, or for justice, democracy and liberty for the Mexican people.

3. We are going to try to build, or rebuild, another way of doing politics, one which once again has the spirit of serving others, without material interests, with sacrifice, with dedication, with honesty, which keeps its word, whose only payment is the satisfaction of duty performed, or like the militants of the left did before, when they were not stopped by blows, jail or death, let alone by dollar bills.

4. We are also going to go about raising a struggle in order to demand that we make a new Constitution, new laws which take into account the demands of the Mexican people, which are: housing, land, work, food, health, education, information, culture, independence, democracy, justice, liberty and peace. A new Constitution which recognizes the rights and liberties of the people, and which defends the weak in the face of the powerful.

TO THESE ENDS:

The EZLN will send a delegation of its leadership in order to do this work throughout the national territory and for an indefinite period of time. This zapatista delegation, along with those organizations and persons of the left who join in this Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona, will go to those places where they are expressly invited

We are also letting you know that the EZLN will establish a policy of alliances with non-electoral organizations and movements which define themselves, in theory and practice, as being of the left, in accordance with the following conditions:

Not to make agreements from above to be imposed below, but to make accords to go together to listen and to organize outrage. Not to raise movements which are later negotiated behind the backs of those who made them, but to always take into account the opinions of those participating. Not to seek gifts, positions, advantages, public positions, from the Power or those who aspire to it, but to go beyond the election calendar. Not to try to resolve from above the problems of our Nation, but to build FROM BELOW AND FOR BELOW an alternative to neoliberal destruction, an alternative of the left for Mexico.

Yes to reciprocal respect for the autonomy and independence of organizations, for their methods of struggle, for their ways of organizing, for their internal decision making processes, for their legitimate representations. And yes to a clear commitment for joint and coordinated defense of national sovereignty, with intransigent opposition to privatization attempts of electricity, oil, water and natural resources.

In other words, we are inviting the unregistered political and social organizations of the left, and those persons who lay claim to the left and who do not belong to registered political parties, to meet with us, at the time, place and manner in which we shall propose at the proper time, to organize a national campaign, visiting all possible corners of our Patria, in order to listen to and organize the word of our people. It is like a campaign, then, but very otherly, because it is not electoral.

Brothers and sisters:
This is our word which we declare:

In the world, we are going to join together more with the resistance struggles against neoliberalism and for humanity.

And we are going to support, even if it&Mac226;s but little, those struggles.
And we are going to exchange, with mutual respect, experiences, histories, ideas, dreams.
In Mexico, we are going to travel all over the country, through the ruins left by the neoliberal wars and through those resistances which, entrenched, are flourishing in those ruins.

We are going to seek, and to find, those who love these lands and these skies even as much as we do.

We are going to seek, from La Realidad to Tijuana, those who want to organize, struggle and build what may perhaps be the last hope this Nation - which has been going on at least since the time when an eagle alighted on a nopal in order to devour a snake -- has of not dying.

We are going for democracy, liberty and justice for those of us who have been denied it.
We are going with another politics, for a program of the left and for a new Constitution.
We are inviting all indigenous, workers, campesinos, teachers, students, housewives, neighbors, small businesspersons, small shop owners, micro-businesspersons, pensioners, handicapped persons, religious men and women, scientists, artists, intellectuals, young persons, women, old persons, homosexuals and lesbians, boys and girls -- to participate, whether individually or collectively, directly with the zapatistas in this NATIONAL CAMPAIGN for building another way of doing politics, for a program of national struggle of the left, and for a new Constitution.

And so this is our word as to what we are going to do and how we are going to do it. You will see whether you want to join.

And we are telling those men and women who are of good heart and intent, who are in agreement with this word we are bringing out, and who are not afraid, or who are afraid but who control it, to then state publicly whether they are in agreement with this idea we are presenting, and in that way we will see once and for all who and how and where and when this new step in the struggle is to be made.

While you are thinking about it, we say to you that today, in the sixth month of the year 2005, the men, women, children and old ones of the Zapatista Army of National

Liberation have now decided, and we have now subscribed to, this Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona, and those who know how to sign, signed, and those who did not left their mark, but there are fewer now who do not know how, because education has advanced here in this territory in rebellion for humanity and against neoliberalism, that is in zapatista skies and land.

And this was our simple word sent out to the noble hearts of those simple and humble people who resist and rebel against injustices all over the world.

Democracy!
Liberty!
Justice!

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast.

Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee -- General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

Mexico, in the sixth month, or June, of the year 2005.

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Vita

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